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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 11 April 2017

Mardi 11 avril 2017

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 April 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 avril 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER SCHOOL ZONES ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to you. You were really eager to get the House in action today, as I was. I was up quite early this morning and I had a great breakfast this morning with the people who are downstairs for advocacy day—

Interjection: On Parkinson's.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —on Parkinson's. Yes, I know. I know. Thank you for helping me out. There's a lot more that I have to say here that you can help me out with.

Anyways, as always, it's an honour and a privilege to stand here at my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin to talk today in regard to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act.

I'd like to say first that it is so important to protect our kids. Everybody knows that an accident can happen so fast. That's why we need to make sure places where kids are must be as safe as they can be.

Schools, of course, are the kind of place where you don't want to imagine something bad happening. You want school zones to be as safe as possible, and that's why we need to reduce the speeds.

To be clear, this is not just for children. This is for every day and everybody around the school. Many people come by the school either to pick up their children or to teach. These people are there to give all their attention to the children they're taking care of. Safe school zones are and must be at the forefront.

I'll add that school zones are often community centres where people gather and socialize. I come from a riding where most municipalities are fairly small, but my point

would probably reach every community and neighbourhood in our province. Schools are the heartbeat of our communities. We need to make them safe, first for our children, but for everybody else as well. Honestly, no one wants to see our young ones not being able to go play in the schoolyard with friends after supper while cars are driving at 70 kilometres an hour.

I wanted to bring a little bit of a story from my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. Mr. Roy invited me to Manitoulin Secondary School to a civics class a couple of years ago. He had a very interesting project. What he wanted to do was to identify a particular crossing—never mind photo radar, just a crossing—in order to illuminate it and put up the proper signage that is required so that kids can cross the highway safely to get to their school.

I was invited to listen to some of the pros and cons with the students in the classroom. We were very much engaged. It was actually a project that was led by the children, by the school kids. They wanted to see this happen before one of their schoolmates got hurt or injured or even worse—that maybe a life was taken while they were walking to school.

We talked about what was required, the process, who we needed to talk to over at the Ministry of Transportation, within government, how we could advocate, how petitions would work out. They came up with a whole school diagram of the area, what they wanted to do and how they wanted to improve it.

Then they found out how hard it is sometimes to change certain laws. This really frustrated not only the parents, but it also frustrated the chief of the community, which was M'Chigeeng. Chief Linda Debassige was very upset that the government was not responding to what the students had been asking for for a very long time.

What they did is, they went out and they painted the highway so that it could be identified where the kids could actually cross safely. Because this was on a provincial highway, Highway 540, which is crossing right in the middle of that community—most of the community members are on one side of the highway; the school is found on the other side of the highway—you would think that common sense tells you, “Hey, let's put in a crossing. Let's put a light here to identify to people to slow down and pay attention.”

But the requirement was that we needed somebody to take responsibility for that light. We needed somebody to guard that light during the day while the kids were going there. To this day, I'm sad to say, that crossing is still a hazard for kids. Never mind a camera—we're actually talking about a regular crossing.

That's what's frustrating sometimes when you deal with what some would see as good common sense. You would think, there is a school there, there are kids, and there is a park; it would make sense to put in an amber light to warn people that there are people who are potentially crossing there. It would make sense to put in those ribbed white lines across the highway. To this day, again, we're fighting to get that done. I'm not giving up.

I want to tell Mr. Roy and his civics class that I'm looking forward to visiting your class. I hope this is going to be one of the topics that we're going to be talking about when I come to school this time, but here we are talking about photo radar, and I can't even get a light or a crossing sign or some ribs painted on a highway. There's a problem.

I wanted to highlight that particular issue from my riding. I want to give a shout-out to Chief Debassige along with Mr. Roy and all of the students: Don't give up. Keep pushing it. Keep pushing me to push this government in order to get those changes in place so that we can actually have a safer crosswalk for our kids that are going to MSS. One last shout-out: Go, Mustangs, go. Good luck in the playoffs.

It also brings me to another point—I had a lot to say on this debate but unfortunately, as you start talking, time goes by. We know we have the technology for it. We can do these things. It brings me to my colleague from Essex, who also pointed out that in opposition to a similar bill—he presented to this House Bill 99, the Safer Roads and Safer Communities Act—Bill 65 doesn't authorize photo radar in construction zones, and I know my friend from Essex is very keen and interested on seeing this actually come in. It's pretty disappointing to see this. Sure, people are in a rush when they drop off their kids in the morning when they go to school, but they're also rushing when they're driving through construction zones, and our construction people need to be considered when we're talking about this law.

0910

The problem is that we have opened the discussion for safer roads—like I said, why not do it correctly right away? Why not include construction zones in this bill? Believe me, even after dropping off their kids, people are not in any lesser rush, because we're trying to get to and from work as quickly as possible and sometimes we're just not paying that much attention. We have the opportunity to tell workers, "Your lives matter, and we want to protect you."

Again, Speaker, it must be my values that I have—I want to make sure that everyone is safe and that everybody gets to work and that everybody gets to school.

Let's pretend this bill passes. We're looking at improved safety in our communities and on our roads. I'm definitely for anything that helps us make our communities safer.

This bill also allows for more independence for safety in municipalities. I'm glad to see this government giving municipalities some flexibility. However, the other concern that I have is—we shouldn't forget that this can

always be a slippery slope, leading to more downloads and responsibilities on municipalities. That's certainly something they don't need. I can't insist enough that municipalities in my riding in northern Ontario and elsewhere can't take any more on their shoulders. Most particularly, small towns don't have the financial capacity that comes with those new responsibilities.

This bill is talking about bringing photo radar in a school zone. I'm looking for an identified safe walking area crosswalk for kids going to school, with a light. I'm having a hard time getting that.

I'm all for this, and I'm all for safer school zones. But there's common sense that we also have to apply—that will consider crosswalks and will also consider our construction people who try to build the infrastructure that we need in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Speaker. Good morning. It's good to see you here. And I say good morning to all of my colleagues.

For the people watching at home, let's just give you a recap. This morning, we're debating Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. We're into about the 10th hour, I believe, of discussing this bill. It's going to give municipalities the option of using three key road safety tools. Ontario does have among the safest roads in North America, but we know there's always room for improvement.

What are you going to get in Bill 65? One of the points is automated speed enforcement. You've heard some people talk about this as photo radar. You can call it what you want. It's going to give municipalities the ability to install this technology, to capture speeders and to issue tickets. It's also going to give municipalities the right to appoint community safety zones. Municipalities that choose to have this kind of technology are going to be responsible for all aspects of the program. They're going to have to buy, install, process and distribute the tickets. Municipalities will get to keep the revenue that comes from the speeding tickets.

Also in this bill is reduced default speed limits. Currently, the urban default speed limit is 50 kilometres per hour. That's the current law right now. But Bill 65 would allow municipalities to establish reduced default speed limits. Municipalities can, through bylaws, implement posted speeds other than the default limit.

Third on the list is the red light camera program. Red light cameras allow municipalities to use photo technology to lay charges against motorists who are running red lights, and a number of municipalities already have this. Speaker, we've listened to municipalities. We've listened to mayors and to chiefs of police and to councillors. They want the ability to have this in order to calm traffic and keep our school zones safer.

I've heard that the third party is going to be supporting this. We look forward to support from all members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's interesting, the comments from the member from Kitchener Centre—talking about how municipalities are going to keep all the money from these tickets. That, in fact, is the reason that I won't be supporting this bill. If it was just about school zones, because the safety of our children is of paramount issue to all of us—but the Liberals have basically said it themselves: This is about cash generation; this is about revenue. It's not about safety. You've said it yourself, I say to the member from Kitchener Centre: Municipalities are going to get to keep the money. The priority should be about our children and keeping them safe. Narrow this up. Narrow this up to the school zones alone so that we do everything we can to keep our children safe.

Anybody who's speeding through a school zone, absolutely we want them to be nailed. We'd rather that the driver themselves get nailed so it would mean demerit points and eventually that person would lose their privilege to drive. But the Liberals have basically said it: This is about a revenue tool for the municipalities, so they can declare these community safety zones anywhere they want. Then it's just going to be about photo radar here, photo radar there—generate cash.

The reason the municipalities—of course they want cash, because the Liberals, regardless of their rhetoric, have continued to download more and more expenses to the municipalities. They do it by stealth. They've reduced so much of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund over the years. It's slowly gone down to where some municipalities have dwindled to almost nothing—almost nothing. They've dwindled to almost nothing. Do municipalities want revenue tools? Absolutely. This is not the way to do it.

Let's keep our children safe. Let's keep the children the priority, not the Liberal Party and revenue generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm excited to be part of this debate this morning. I want to congratulate my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Also, the debate in this House is lively. As representatives of constituencies, we have passion on many issues. This particular bill is very important because it talks about the safety of children. Most of us have children or we know children, or we're aunts, uncles, grandparents, that kind of thing.

I just want to point out that we've acknowledged that driving on a public road is a privilege. We know that there is distracted driving. We know that even before cellphones were part of our lifestyle, there was distracted driving. We take measures in order to ticket people in order to bring that to their attention, that they cannot use their vehicle and not pay attention to what they are doing because other people's safety is at risk. We've taken those measures.

We also take measures when there is speeding in school zones and neighbourhoods. We put speed bumps or hump bumps, we put stop signs, we design roads—urban design in order to slow down traffic. There are ways we have acknowledged that this is a problem.

Now we're taking it one step further and we're talking about cameras in school zones. It is important that we acknowledge there is a problem and we need to find solutions. This is not a new concept. We have dash cams and we have cameras on buses. This is basically another metric, another way to keep our kids safe in school zones.

I heard the member from the Conservatives talking about his concern that he doesn't want this to be far-reaching, outside of the school zones. That's a place we are here to talk about here at debate but also in committee. That's a real area where people can give their facts and presentations on the pros and cons, and hopefully, they'll work through that in committee and come up with the best solution to protect children and keep our children safe in school zones.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise this morning to support Bill 65. I listened intently about this particular bill. The key piece of this message I want to make sure my constituents in Scarborough-Agincourt hear about is that Ontario roads are among the safest in North America, but there's always room for more improvement.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talked about just focusing on the school safety zones. It's more than just that. We have a growing seniors community so the bill, if passed, will also address the whole issue of community safety zones in our neighbourhoods with lots of seniors. This would be considered by the municipality, making sure the speed can be lowered.

If the member opposite can listen very carefully, the city of Toronto Ontario Public Health Association talked about "speed kills." Speed kills. If we can lower the speed, we can save more lives.

0920

I want to remind the member opposite: Municipalities have been asking us, from Ottawa, Toronto—the mayor of the city of Toronto has been asking us. Your colleague the member from Scarborough-Rouge River has been asking about the safety of photo radar and what have you. The city of Hamilton, Oxford county, Chatham-Kent: They are all asking for the whole issue of automated speed enforcement.

The other piece here that we need to remind every member of the House about is the fact that the red light camera is only enforced—like the member from Essex said last week in his remarks, if you weren't speeding, you wouldn't be caught. You've got to be mindful of the fact that there will be a camera. There are cameras all over internationally, and yet the member opposite keeps saying it's a tax grab. That's not the truth. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for final comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: To the member from Kitchener Centre, you talked about the safest roads in North America. I'm just going to say this: Foleyet, Chapleau, Nairn Centre, Wawa and Elliot Lake probably don't

mean anything to you, but those people know what that comment means to them.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: Sometimes penalties are needed in order to change an act or a behaviour. That's something that this bill will actually be able to do. Yes, there are going to be fines at the beginning, but that is going to be curtailed as the behaviour changes. A lot of that work is going to be done at committee, making sure that it addresses some of your constituents' concerns. As the member from London–Fanshawe brought forward, it is all about safety for our kids and making sure that those areas are safe as well.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt also brought up the comment about the safest roads in North America. To you, my friend, I will say: Dubreuilville, Bruce Mines, Blind River, Meldrum Bay, Manitowaning, Espanola, and I have other communities in my riding that have been affected by our roads, by the lack of care on our roads. I know you don't understand or know where those communities are, but the people who do live there know the views that they have brought forward on many occasions through my seat that I hold here in the Legislature, as far as bringing the attention that is required to having safe roads across this province. Sometimes saying it doesn't mean that it's actually happening. There needs to be a lot more.

Again, with I want to give a shout-out to teacher Mr. Roy out of M'Chigeeng, over at Manitoulin Secondary School, who is working with the civics class that had worked on this project in order to get a safe crossing for the kids at their school. Good on you. Don't give up.

Chief Linda Debassige from M'Chigeeng First Nation, I will look at every avenue possible as far as getting this done. Anything that can be done to provide that safe environment that our kids need at their schools needs to be done at all levels. Sometimes it's just good common sense that we need to change the rules sometimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Happy Equal Pay Day. It's a pleasure to rise today on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. I think members from all sides of the House, at least members of each of the parties from all sides of the House, would have had experience either at the school trustee level or at the regional council level, perhaps they served as a mayor, perhaps they served as a reeve or councillor. There are a number of us who come to this place after having served at the local level.

As much as we like to think that that service at the local level was about some of the more heady issues of the day, I can remember in my time of 18 years as regional councillor, the number one call I got in my community was about speeding. It was about cars travelling too fast through neighbourhoods.

When I talked to the school trustees, often what they were dealing with was speeding through school zones, where the school buses would come, where they would park, where the parents would have to park when there was pickup or drop-off. There is a sense of security in

knowing that your child, when they go to school, is in an area where everybody is on top of their game and is paying attention if they're driving a car or if they're just in the area in general.

I think when you come from that type of an environment, or that sort of background—and there are members from all three parties, I know, who come from that background—you have a level of respect for that level of government and that should extend, I think, right through to the federal level. There are things that are within the federal purview which the province has involvement in. There are things in the provincial purview that the municipalities actually implement and put into action. Bill 65 deals with that and the relationship between the province and the municipality. The intent of the bill is quite simple—it's called the Safer School Zones Act. The intent is just to make our communities all over Ontario safer than they are today.

Somebody has mentioned that we have some of the safest roads in the province of Ontario. Somebody else mentioned, from the opposition, that that doesn't mean that we can't make them safer, and I absolutely agree, Speaker. I think there is a feeling that we can't do enough to keep our school zones safe and we should constantly be exploring other ways of doing it. Bill 65 does exactly that. It brings in the option of automated speed enforcement for a municipality that feels that it needs to implement image capture when somebody is driving through a school zone. The other alternative would be to station a police officer there all day long. I think people understand the implications of that: that our police officers could be put to much better use in the community when there is a better way of enforcing the speed limit through school zones.

The reduced speed limits, the default speed limits, are another way of allowing a municipality—which understands what goes on within its borders or boundaries much better than somebody from outside the boundaries—the option of establishing reduced speed limits. It can't increase those speed limits; it has to reduce the speed limits and the way that that sign—it doesn't have to mean there is a sign every 100 yards. It means you can have a sign at the beginning of that zone and a sign on the way out of that zone as well.

The red light camera, anecdotally—I'm sure I'm not the only one who is noticing this, but I have noticed a gradual, increasing disrespect for red lights over the past few years. It used to be that when the light was orange, you would stop. You would think, that's going to be a red light, I'd better stop soon. It seems to me there are more and more people who are taking chances that they can run that red before the cars start going the other way. That can only lead, eventually, to tragic circumstances. I think that some of the speeds that cars are travelling through these intersections mean we need a renewed respect for what a red light means. It's very simple. It doesn't get any clearer than a red light means stop. To some people, it seems to me, a red light means speed up, perhaps you can get through. It's exactly the opposite to

what we want. We hear from time to time about accidents that take place at intersections because a motorist has decided to run a red light.

There is an automated way of doing that. It's by mounting a camera that tells you, when you entered that zone, when you entered the zone of the intersection, whether the light was orange or whether it was red. It's very clear-cut. I understand that the imaging is something that you just can't argue with when you see it. You know you are guilty and you just send the fine in because it's very, very apparent. There is nobody's opinion involved in this. It's a picture of what happened. Certainly, we wouldn't want that everywhere, but we do want it at the intersections where most of the accidents take place.

What I've heard is that everybody wants to make our school zones safer. I haven't heard anybody argue from that. The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills said, "We are very supportive of the part of the act that pertains to the school zones and having photo radar in the school zones." The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, said, "There are things in this bill I think we can all agree upon." And I agree with that. He said, "I support the change to allow municipalities to use red light cameras without having to come to the province," and asking us for regulation to allow them to do that. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo said, "We believe that this is the right direction to go in." It's a bill that is getting support from all sides of the House.

I've also heard some members opposite—for example, the MPP from Timiskaming–Cochrane, is saying, "After having listened to the debate, we are fully in favour of this bill going to committee and being made even better, if it's possible." I think that's a very progressive way of looking at it, and we are a government that's always open to new ideas and to making bills better. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo said—she's had a lot to say about this and it's all been good stuff, I think—"I hope that you will know that while we are looking for greater clarity on some of the pieces of legislation," which is fair, "we will be supporting Bill 65 and making it stronger at committee."

Speaker, as you know, this bill has seen more than 10 hours of debate. We have had many of our members of the Legislature speak to this bill. However, I think what we're starting to hear is a repetition of the points: that we're all in favour of this, it's time to get it into committee and it's time to make, perhaps, some of the improvements that those on the other side of the House are suggesting we do.

I believe it's time that the bill be put to a vote for second reading. Hopefully, then, it would be referred to committee, where the important work that's being spoken about can take place.

As a result, Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Flynn has moved that the question now be put. There have been, in fact, over 10 hours of debate, and over 26 speakers have addressed it in some way, shape or form or

provided comments. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Therefore, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I believe I may have heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question now be put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question now be put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: No further business, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being nothing further to debate, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0932 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we begin the introductions, I know that there's quite a few people in the House today, so let's be brief, do our introduction and no amplification, shall I say.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to stand in the House today and welcome to the Legislature the regional chair of the region of Niagara, Alan Caslin. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We have members of the Greater Essex Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario with us today: Sharon Ciebin and Mario Spagnuolo. An old friend, Yvette Blackburn, is here as well, formerly from Windsor.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wanted to rise and introduce a number of guests here today from Essex-Windsor, EMS. They will be representing EMS Team Ontario at the upcoming international paramedic competition in the Czech Republic: Christopher Kirwan, Michael Filiault, Lance Huver and Shawn May. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome Gary Oosterhof and Scott Huckins from the Ontario Electrical League to the Legislature today.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to welcome our mayor of Niagara Falls, Mr. Jim Diodati; the CAO, Mr. Ken Todd; and Mr. Serge Felicetti.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I would like to welcome the grade 5 class from Centennial Road Junior Public School in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very proud to welcome Julie Stanley and Andrew Chittka, who are representing the Bluewater ETFO teachers today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome, from the Ontario Electric League, Stephen Sell, the president; Cathy Frederickson, the manager, member ser-

vices; Corey DeBruyn from Brantford; Dale MacDonald from Chatham; and Walter Pamic from Stittsville, on behalf of the member from Ottawa—West Nepean.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Dale MacDonald of Honey Electric, right in the Chatham-Kent riding.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would like to introduce guests of page captain Taylor Wilson: mother, Catherine Rosebrugh, and grandmother Elaine Rosebrugh. They're in the public gallery this morning.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to introduce Dave Ackison from Peterborough, Ackison Electric. Welcome to the Legislature, Dave.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome John Monteiro, who is from my riding of Durham, here today with the Ontario Electrical League. I would also like to welcome George Taylor from my riding as well, the president of ETFO Durham Occasional Teachers' Local.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today local elementary teachers who are here with ETFO. MPP Bailey and I met with them this morning, as well as the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects.

Miss Monique Taylor: I see a good friend up in the lobby today: Cory Judson. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm sure he's here with the ETFO lobby day today.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today I would like to welcome, from my riding of Barrie, three representatives of the Simcoe County Elementary Teachers' Federation: Janet Bigham, Krista Haidner and Amy Chevis.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome Brian Scheele, John Monteiro and Rob De Ciantis from the OEL. We met with them today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to welcome Gina McAfee—she's the president of ETFO for early childhood educators—and Bernadette Lamirande, who is also president of ETFO for occasional teachers in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: From landscape architects of Ontario, I'd like to welcome Judith Wright, Mike Leonard, Todd Smith, Paul Shelton, Shawn Watters, Timothy Dobson, Aina Budrevics and Chastine Abe.

From ETFO, I extend a warm welcome to Debi Wells and Jane Roberts.

From Parkinson Canada: Debbie Davis.

From my riding of Kingston and the Islands: Gary Oosterhof from the Ontario Electrical League.

Welcome.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming, from the Upper Grand District School Board and Peel District School Board, ETFO representatives Andrew Aloe, Matt Jackson and Shelly Jan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I know that there are many here today from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. I can't name them all individually, but we are delighted to have them among us.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce ETFO Halton representatives Rob Smolenaars, president;

David Buddell, vice-president; and Al Bero, president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Joining us in the members' gallery today is Walter Pamic of Power-Tek Electrical Services, here with the Ontario Electrical League today.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome some more ETFO members from Hamilton. We have Jeff Sorensen, Tania Kerr, Barry Naidoo and Tamara DuFour. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would be delighted to welcome all of the Elementary Teachers' Federation members who are here in the House today for their Queen's Park lobby day.

I'd like to introduce the provincial executive members: Susan Swackhammer, ETFO's first vice-president; Nancy Lawler, vice-president; Diane Dewing, OTF table officer; Gail Bannister-Clarke, executive member for Peel; Nathan Core, executive member for Waterloo region; Tania Kerr, executive member, Hamilton-Wentworth; Debi Wells, executive member, Limestone; and Yvette Blackburn, executive member for Toronto.

Also, we have Toronto members John Smith, president, Elementary Teachers of Toronto; Sophie Kroesen, president, Toronto occasional teachers; and Christina Meynell, vice-president, Toronto occasional teachers.

Please give them a big, warm welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: In the west members' gallery, I'd like to welcome retired teacher Ryan Tripp of Bracebridge, who is here as part of Parkinson Canada lobby day. As well, from ETFO: Karen Bratina, president, ETFO Trillium Lakelands teacher local; Tina Matthews from Gravenhurst; Judith Arai from Sundridge; and Dave Bartlett from Parry Sound.

Please welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd also like to welcome all the ETFO members here today—but a particular warm welcome to those members from my region of Peel. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd like to welcome the Peterborough ETFO group from the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and Dave Ackison, president of Ackison Electric, with the Ontario Electrical League, from Peterborough.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome Jean Keary from Parkinson Canada to the Legislature.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: From Windsor and Essex county, EMS Team Ontario: Chris Kirwan, Lance Huver, Mike Filiault and Shawn May. As the Premier said, they're on their way to Slovakia to defend their international championship.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce Doug McGinley, who's here today from the Ontario Electrical League.

Also, our page captain today is a delightful young man you've all met: Joshua Geddes. He's here with his proud mother, Irena, and his proud sister Megan.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome, from ETFO, Upper Canada District School Board: Erin Blair, Diane

Dewing and Sylvia Van Campen. I had a great meeting with them.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome Mark Carter, president, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Niagara Occasional Teachers' Local, from St. Catharines.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Yvon Trepanier from Appin, Ontario, who is here with Parkinson Canada.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My colleague from Whitby has been good enough to introduce Jean Keary.

I should tell you, Mr. Speaker, if I may, that Jean is the Ontario committee chair of Parkinson's Ontario. She has been, in Ajax, the chair of that event 17 successive years—I know, because I've been there with her.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Please help me welcome Bernadette Lamirande and Gina McAfee, both here from my riding, with ETFO.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Sprague Plato from Ottawa, who's here with the Parkinson society today.

1040

Mr. Arthur Potts: We have acres of landscape architects here, including the president, Doris Chee, and the executive director, Aina Budrevics. We have a reception in rooms 228 and 230 at 5 o'clock this afternoon. All members are welcome.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me pleasure to welcome a good friend, Yvette Blackburn, who is a member of ETFO but also a great teacher here in Toronto. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of members from Ottawa, in addition to our good friend Sprague Plato, I also want to welcome Janet Fraser, who is the president of the Ottawa-Carleton ETFO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to welcome ETFO members from Thunder Bay and region: Michael Judge and Nancy Nix from Lakehead; Dave Passi and Colleen Lemieux from Superior-Greenstone; and Monica Armour from Rainy River. Welcome.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Laura Casselman, who is here with Brown and Cohen on behalf of the landscape architects. Welcome.

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Erin Blair from the great village of Maxville, who's with us today from ETFO. Welcome, Erin.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I know she's already been introduced, but I'd also like to introduce in this House Yvette Blackburn, as well as Laura Casselman.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd also like to introduce Robert Sloan, with the Ontario Electrical League. We met earlier today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you all for your patience and for keeping it as quick as possible. It is important to acknowledge all of our guests here. That's why I'm providing the extra time that's necessary.

I do have some guests as well. To those who are here from ETFO and from the Electrical League and other places, thank you for being here, on behalf of Brant.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery, we have Melanie Morissette, the mother of page Sophie Richie. Welcome.

Also in the gallery are two outstanding staff members that I have: one from the constituency office, Kaitlin, and from my Queen's Park office, Esther. Thank you for being here, everyone.

Finally, for the one person who wasn't introduced, welcome. Now you know how I feel getting up and down all the time.

It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. We are joined here today by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario as they come to Queen's Park to stand up for their 78,000 members.

I want to welcome every teacher here today and take a moment to recognize all teachers in classrooms across Ontario. Thank you for what you do. They deserve the safest possible classrooms. They deserve the best resources to create a world-class learning environment. But it seems the government disagrees.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally put students and teachers first, rather than this government's own political agenda?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to reinforce the welcome to all of the teachers who are here and all of their representatives. There is nothing more important in this province than the start that we give to our youngest children, and right through their education careers that they have the supports in place.

I got involved in provincial politics, as did so many people in our government, because of publicly funded education, because of the challenges that publicly funded education was facing at the hands of a government that actually didn't believe in publicly funded education, that actually was pushing children into the private system.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, there were no caps on early years. There was no full-day kindergarten. The graduation rate in this province was 68%—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. We may be headed down testy Tuesday. I will pass the test and it will not be testy Tuesday.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I brought that on myself, I guess. But I'm going to ask you all to kind of tone it down. If not, I'll bring it down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: That response coming from a Premier who has 600 schools on the chopping block—so much for support for public education.

ETFO supported the Ontario Autism Coalition's call for this Liberal government to finally and truly support students with autism and special education needs. ETFO president Sam Hammond said, "Both the coalition and ETFO are emphatic that the Ontario Ministry of Education needs to overhaul its funding for special education." The first step into that overhaul is a proper review.

So, if you are committed to special education—Mr. Speaker, to the Premier—will you heed this ETFO call and have a review on your special education funding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We will work closely with ETFO. I want to make sure that all of the supports and resources are in place so that children have the best learning environment possible and so that teachers and education workers have the safest and the best working environments possible. We have worked in partnership with our education federations and with the unions to develop policies that are in the best interest of kids.

We've also built 810 new schools in this province. There have been major renovations to 780. We are paying close attention to the working conditions and the learning conditions of kids in the system. At the same time, those physical conditions are extremely important. So will we work in partnership with ETFO? Absolutely, we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: There was no response to ETFO's call for a review of special education. The reality is that we know that four out of five school boards say they spend more on special education funding than they receive from the province. Because of that, ETFO's Building Better Schools platform says this: "Often, school boards are strapped for funds and are compelled to take the money that has been allocated to other program areas to support special education, which leaves every kid at a loss."

Mr. Speaker, school boards should not have to choose between which children to support; they should be able to support all children, all students. That's not happening in Ontario today because of this government's lack of commitment to public education.

My question again: ETFO has asked for a review of the special education funding. Yes or no: Will the Premier honour that request?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was very clear in my previous answer that we will work in partnership with ETFO. I can't be more emphatic that it is incredibly important for us as a government to work with the people who are on the front lines in our schools and who understand the issues. That's why we've increased special education funding by billions of dollars. That's why we put in place the provincial health and safety working group. If there is more that we need to do, we will absolutely work with our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We would not have increased the funding for special education by 70% since 2003 if we didn't believe that there was a need to support kids, all kids, in our school system.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Did the Minister of Energy receive consent to release Kisko's private billing information? Yes or no?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: In relation to Kisko, it's great that we work with our partners, with Alectra, and Alectra works with Kisko. Alectra was the one that said they will qualify for the ICI program, just like thousands of other businesses right across our province will qualify for the ICI program thanks to this government.

I know on that side they don't have a plan. They have no plan for electricity. They have no plan for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not my concern. Do you want to carry on a conversation? We're inching towards warnings.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As we say, every business that has 500 kilowatts or above will qualify for the ICI program. We want every business in Ontario that qualifies to sign up so they can get the help.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: My question was, did the Minister of Energy receive consent to release this private billing information from Kisko? There was no response from the minister on that. He obviously did not seek consent.

So my question is, did the Minister of Energy breach privacy laws when discussing Kisko's private billing information? If that happened, can we expect an apology to Kisko from the Minister of Energy?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: That party doesn't have a plan on what to do with electricity. They don't have a plan on what to do for Ontario. But they—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: They ask a question about a business that won't qualify and we clarify it for them, just like we do every day—that they will qualify.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook will come to order. And would you mind stopping using your hands as a megaphone?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to business in this province, we're going to continue to work with all of the businesses; we're going to continue to work with the Ontario Cham-

ber of Commerce to make sure that as many businesses out there that qualify for ICI get on the ICI program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: I'm not sure he appreciates the seriousness of this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the member told the House this: "They actually have 600 kilowatts of power. We confirmed with Alectra, their electric company, that they qualify for the ICI program." We know that is not true. They don't qualify for that program. We know they didn't have consent to release those numbers.

My question is this: How does this government have the audacity to release incorrect information? Can the minister be trusted with private information? Is there no contrition from this minister for doing what is clearly wrong?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Now their competitors know their volume. Don't you get it? Don't you get it?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, thousands of businesses in this province will qualify for the ICI program, knowing that they use more than 500 kilowatts of power. That's the one thing that we talk about all the time.

They don't have a plan to help businesses. They don't know what to do for businesses. We do. We're helping them, with the ICI program, the industrial conservation initiative, providing businesses with saving up to one third on their electricity bill. We were also there with that business last week, with OMAFRA, announcing a grant program for that as well, Mr. Speaker. Not only are we helping this business and many businesses right across the province with energy, we're actually helping them with grants too.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. This year's sunshine list revealed that even within the public sector in Ontario, a massive wage gap for women still persists. Only 25% of the people on the list in 2017 were women.

If the Premier can't get this right in her own house after her party has been in charge for more than 14 years, how does she expect the people of this province to trust that she is working to close the wage gap for all Ontario women?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know that closing the wage gap is an extremely important imperative. We have been taking action. We're committed to getting there,

whether it is setting a target for women to make up at least 40% of public appointments to every provincial board and agency by 2019—and I would just say that across all of those agencies and boards we're actually at 44%, but that doesn't mean that every single one is at 40%. That is our commitment.

Encouraging businesses to appoint more women to their boards of directors, or whether it's the direct funding increases that we put into salaries for personal support workers, early childhood educators and developmental support workers, the vast majority of whom are women—those are all initiatives that this government has taken to work to close that wage gap.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: The Premier and her ministers have said they will try to put more women in more important roles in the public sector. She has asked the Toronto Stock Exchange nicely if they would please promote more women to their boards. What women in this province need now is concrete action; encouraging or asking nicely isn't enough anymore.

When will the Premier take this issue seriously and commit to enforcing tough measures to ensure that women in this province don't have to go to work and wonder if their male counterparts are still making more money than they are?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the President of the Treasury Board will want to speak to this. I will acknowledge that when we put the "comply or explain" encouragement policy in place, I fully expected that businesses would step up, that we would see an increase on boards because there is a strong economic imperative. We know that businesses that put women on boards do better, so I fully expected that we would see a better result. That has not happened.

There has not been the increase that we had expected, so we have put targets in place. If that doesn't work, we will be prepared to move forward with more stringent measures.

Mr. Speaker, I completely and fully support the move towards having more women involved, whether it's in the cabinet of a government or whether it's a board of an agency or another kind of organization, or whether it's a private sector company. We need more women involved—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, real action could come from this Premier and her Liberal government as early as budget day.

The Pay Equity Commission's budget was cut in half by the Conservatives in 1997, and has been flatlined for the last decade under the Liberals. As a result, we have seen more than half of all Ontario employers not complying with their legal pay equity obligations. The commission needs to be fully funded so that it can actually enforce pay equity compliance and have a meaningful impact on women's lives in this province.

Will the Premier's budget this spring include funding for the incredibly important work of the Pay Equity Commission?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Obviously, we have more work to do in this area. I think everybody recognizes that. But the Ontario public service actually has been a leader in addressing the gender wage gap. If you look at this year's data, we have actually reduced the pay gap between men and women in this year's sunshine list data from 15.8% down to 12.5%. There's still more work to do, but if you look at who's in middle management in the public service, 55% of those positions are occupied by women. If you look at who is in the OPS senior management group, you find that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It must be the seat. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I now have empathy. Come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I take responsibility for that. I'm sorry.

Please finish.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Where we do see a gap is women in the public service and the STEM occupations—in engineering, in physicist roles, in I&IT roles. That's a gap that is reflected in society. As a society, we need to close that gap.

1100

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Krysta wrote to the NDP to tell us about her soaring hydro bills. She lives in Nipissing, and she's on a fixed income of \$800 per month. The hydro bill she sent us was for \$450.51.

How does the Premier expect Krysta to live and pay hydro at the same time when her bills are so high?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm very pleased to rise and talk about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan that is coming. That's going to help individuals like the individual the honourable member mentioned.

Come this summer, once we get the legislation through this House, we could see up to 25% in reductions for families like that, for individuals like was mentioned. On top of that, if this person is a Hydro One customer or another customer of one of the other six utilities that we've identified, their distribution costs are going to come down significantly, bringing forward their rate of reduction to anywhere between 40% and 50%. That is huge relief for these types of families.

On top of that, we expanded the Ontario Electricity Support Program, adding another 50% and actually loosening the rules so more people will qualify. That is a significant saving of about \$554 on top of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Krysta already takes advantage of the Ontario Electricity Support Program, the rural rate protection program and is exempt from being charged for debt retirement. She still has to choose between paying her hydro bills and buying food. Clearly the Premier and her Liberal government aren't doing enough for people like Krysta.

When will the Premier stop with the partisan posturing and actually present a detailed plan in the Legislature to fix the mess she has helped to create in our hydro system?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, as I mentioned earlier, the Ontario Electricity Support Program that the member mentioned, which this individual has been able to take advantage of, has increased by 50%. That will be a significant savings for this family, and with the RRRP, if you put that together, these are significant savings that families are going to see and that individuals are going to see, come summer. That is when, of course, our system peaks in terms of our cost and generation, so we're going to make sure that we're helping these families.

There are other programs in place through the Ontario fair hydro plan that are actually going to help families and individuals. On top of the 25% every small business and farm is going to qualify for, we're bringing forward an affordability fund that they will be able to access that will actually help them drop their bills even further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: The Premier has not tabled legislation in this House so that Ontario families and businesses know when or if relief is coming. The only thing the Premier has done to deal with exorbitant hydro rates in the province is announce that maybe, sometime in the vague future, she will burden our kids and grandkids with an additional \$40 billion in debt that they will have to pay off.

When will the Premier do something to help people like Krysta and thousands of families and businesses that are suffering under the crushing weight of their hydro bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm very pleased to come and talk about what we are going to do for families and individuals like Krysta: 25% off their bills, on average, by summer; if they are RRRP customers, between 40% and 50% by summer; enhanced OESP, 50%; affordability fund, bringing that forward, up to \$200 million; on-reserve First Nation individuals seeing their distribution costs waived, an \$85 a month savings for these families—

Mr. Paul Miller: It's like remortgaging your house.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: That is very clear relief that is coming for families right across the province.

I know the honourable member used the term "vague." The only party that has a vague plan is the third party. It's a vague plan with pie-in-the-sky thinking, nothing to do to help families or low-income individuals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. I have a very straightforward question for the Premier this morning: Can she tell the House who is the ombudsman at Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know that recently there has been a change within the ombudsman department and the ombudsperson at Hydro One. One thing that Hydro One has been working very hard at is working on getting a replacement. The important thing to know is that the ombudsman office is still there, doing the job that it's supposed to be doing and ensuring that if people have concerns, they can bring those concerns forward to the ombudsman.

I had several meetings with the previous ombudsman from Hydro One, Fiona Crean. She was talking about how great this company has evolved to. Those were her words. We're going to continue to work with Hydro One, and Hydro One is going to continue to work with the ombudsman to make sure that that office plays an important role within the company.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: I've got some advice for the Premier and her minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't help me. I'm trying to do something over here.

The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, second time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It could be your first. Question.

Mr. Steve Clark: A transparent and open government would never answer a question about who is the ombudsman with, "I'll get back to you," especially at a company whose track record of customer service is one horror story after another.

The former Hydro One ombudsman left over a month ago, yet her name and her picture are still on the government website, and there's no media release about her replacement. Who is this government trying to fool?

This government shamefully rewrote the Electricity Act to strip independent provincial watchdogs of their power over Hydro One, but section 48.3 of the act requires the board to have an ombudsman in place. When will the Premier and this government obey their own law?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to once again talk about the ombudsman office at Hydro One. They have an acting ombudsman who is doing great work with the company, making sure that the office is still there doing the job it's supposed to do.

The former ombudsman took another job, just like other people do. We wish her well. She did great work while she was working for Hydro One for the last year. In my last meeting with her, do you know what she said? That this company has really turned around. It is now customer-focused; it is making sure it's doing a better job in meeting the needs of its customers. They would never have acted on the winter reconnection piece that they did in the past.

That's what happens when you don't have a plan for Ontario, or if you don't have a plan on what to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to warnings.

New question.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Incidents of violence in our classrooms are increasing across the province. We're hearing heart-breaking horror stories from our teachers and our parents, and I don't believe this government is listening.

Instead of supporting our students and the education system, this government continues to slash funding for classroom supports. Children as young as four or five are stuck on growing wait-lists for the vital early interventions that they need. As a teacher, I have seen the disruption this causes in classrooms and the dangers it presents students first-hand.

How does the Premier plan to make our schools safer when she won't even provide the basic supports that students need to succeed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Carry on.

1110

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Any incident of violence in our schools is unacceptable. We have to ensure that our school communities are safe for students, for teachers and for education workers, and it's very important that if an incident occurs, a school board has protocols and policies in place that can respond appropriately to that incident, and that there are reporting mechanisms in place as well.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have to provide the right level of support to ensure that the culture of safety is promoted in our schools, and we're working together with our education partners, including ETFO members, who are here today. Just last year we had a half-day devoted, in professional development, to the health and safety of our workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Teachers and education workers have some of the highest levels of lost time due to injuries as a result of workplace violence. When we're

talking about their workplace, we're talking about the classroom, so that means that students are at risk too.

As an ETFO member, I know and appreciate that every student has the right to an education and the right to reach their full potential, and it is this government's obligation to support them, to keep them safe and to ensure that they can learn.

How are we supposed to believe that you are serious about addressing violence in school when you continue to cut supports for students in our classrooms?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. We are increasing our supports in education. Just take, for example, that we have increased education assistants by 37% since 2013: 6,300 education assistants. We have a provincial health and safety working group; we are working together with all of our education partners to strengthen the culture of health and safety.

I can go on, but I want to say to the member opposite that in their plan for education, when they ran in 2014—your plan was to cut supports from health and from education workers. Your proposal was to bring forward \$600 million in cuts. We will continue on this side of the House to invest in our publicly funded education system.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is to the Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. We all know that both 2016 and the start of 2017 have seen many global uncertainties emerge, both politically and economically. I know that Ontario's economy remains poised to lead Canada in growth and has remained strong through the uncertainty.

However, my constituents in Kingston and the Islands and I both have growing concerns over what we're doing as a province to defend our jobs and maintain our access to trade. This is particularly important to me, as well as to our greater chamber of commerce and other Kingston businesses. We need to ensure that we're maintaining strong relationships with our biggest trading partner, the US.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: What are you specifically doing to reassure Ontario families and businesses that we are aware of the importance of our integrated economy and defending Ontario's interests?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Ontario and the US have enjoyed, and still enjoy, a very strong relationship—a strong, balanced economic relationship. That relationship is fundamental to our prosperity here in Ontario.

The work that we have been doing to work with our partners in the federal and Quebec governments to ensure that Canada was top of mind as the discussion around Buy American took place in New York is indicative of how much we value that relationship. The Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Economic Development and Growth both went to Albany. They talked with many, many leaders there. They worked with our representative in Washington, who was on the ground in Albany as well.

We're going to continue to engage with workers and with businesses. As a result, we're very pleased that the

Buy American provisions were dropped from the New York—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. My question is, again, through you to the Premier.

With so many of Ontario's industries and jobs directly impacted by our neighbours to the south, especially those in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, we need to show strength as we now turn our attention to discussions on NAFTA. This is particularly important to businesses in Kingston, as well as all other border communities. We need to maintain momentum as we defend our economy, and position Ontario for long-term success.

Although Buy American is off the table now, there are other issues around a border adjustment tax, as well as ensuring Ontario's views are heard at the NAFTA negotiating table.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: What are you specifically doing to reassure Ontario families and businesses that, as we enter discussions on NAFTA and other key issues, we will be represented?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just begin by saying that we are in a very uncertain time in terms of the policies south of the border and, I would say, beyond.

But specifically in relation to our partners in the United States, we are going to continue to engage in conversations, as the member from Kingston and the Islands has said, on the border adjustment tax, on NAFTA. Even though the Buy American provisions have been dropped from the New York budget, that does not mean that we don't have to continue to be vigilant, because that protectionist rhetoric is still part of the political discourse.

So we are going to continue to work—for example, Mr. Speaker, I will be attending the National Governors Association meeting in Rhode Island in July. I was just in Chicago yesterday meeting with Governor Rauner of Illinois. I will continue to engage with governors around the States to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Start the clock. New question.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of the Status of Women.

Today is pay equity day, which marks 30 years since the unanimous passage of Ontario's Pay Equity Act. Unfortunately, we haven't been making much progress on pay equity under this Liberal government. On average, women in Ontario are paid 30% less for doing the same

work as men, a gap that is only 6% smaller than it was at the time of the act's passage.

Despite these worrying statistics, this government has ignored this issue until last year, when all they did was strike yet another committee. Even now the story has been one of delay and endless consultation rather than action.

My question to the minister is: Why has it taken this government almost 14 years to admit that they need to address pay equity in this province?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today and speak, on pay equity day, on what I think is a very important issue.

First off, I want to point out to the member opposite that this is the side of the House that actually took action on this. With the Premier's assignment of a Ministry of the Status of Women and the first stand-alone minister responsible for early years and child care, we are taking actual concrete steps towards closing the gender wage gap.

The number one recommendation from the steering committee on closing the gender wage gap was to invest in child care. And guess what? We're doing that. We are transforming the way we are delivering child care. We have committed to creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces over the next five years, doubling what we already have.

But that's not all. I am very happy to talk about more of the work that we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the minister: This government likes to talk a big game on this file, but they are living in a bubble of self-delusion. The reality on the ground is that the situation of working women remains largely unchanged under their watch, and that is simply unacceptable.

The government only appointed a dedicated status of women minister this past January—I guess because it's 2017.

As I mentioned to the House yesterday, all the government has done is strike a closed-door committee on pay equity to further review the recommendations already made by an expert committee that reported on pay equity in 2016.

Delay and inaction is the name of this government's game, but Ontario women aren't fooled.

My question to the minister is: Will the government take responsibility for their inaction and admit that it has no real plan to help working women in Ontario finally achieve equality in the workplace?

1120

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I find it surprising that the member opposite is actually talking about inaction when I haven't seen any action from that side of the House on this issue over the history of this province.

Let me tell you, day in and day out, I sit in this House and listen to the criticism that is lobbed from that side of the House to us. Let me tell you something: We are doers. We are acting on this file. We are solving the issues—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am working closely with my colleague the Minister of Labour when it comes to closing the gender wage gap, and this includes the pay equity issue. In fact, Ontario has made great strides when it comes to improving women's economic empowerment. We are leaders in this field. Our commitments to end—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Start the clock. New question.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Under the water in Thunder Bay's North Harbour, there is a massive mercury contamination that is the result of decades of discharge from a paper mill that closed a long time ago. Imagine nearly 400,000 cubic metres of soggy paper towels full of mercury, covering over 50 football fields' worth of lake bed.

In 2014, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, along with federal partners, presented a report outlining options to clean up North Harbour. An action plan was supposed to follow.

Three years later, the people of Thunder Bay are still waiting for the cleanup plan. Where is it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the member raising that very important question, and I would be glad to sit down with him and other members to go through the details of that file.

This government has taken unprecedented action on mercury after 60 years of inaction and contamination.

The neglect of Hamilton Harbour: Only finally under this government is that harbour being cleaned up, in full partnership with the federal government.

Grassy Narrows, after 60 years of neglect: Finally, after 60 years of governments sitting in this House, we're doing that.

The details on where we're at on Thunder Bay: If you had given me a little heads-up about the question, I would gladly get the details. I will sit down with my ministry. I will pull the file and get the details. As you know, there is no lack of action on mercury on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, to the minister: The International Joint Commission identified Thunder Bay's North Harbour as an area of concern over three decades ago. Over 30 years have passed, and there has been no action to clean up the mercury.

Three years ago, we were promised an action plan. Three years later, we're still waiting. How much longer must the people of Thunder Bay wait for the government to take action?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No government in 60 years has taken greater action on mercury than this govern-

ment—no government, including the party opposite, who sat on its hands while—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Come on, Glen. Go for 90.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case I forgot to remind you, we're in warnings. That will be my last warning about warnings.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As I said, including the party opposite, who took no action on mercury for even five seconds when they were in government.

The record in Ontario on dealing with mercury over the last half century, quite frankly, has been shameful. It was only this government that took on the issues in Hamilton Harbour.

I will look into the issue, because I know there is a great deal of work being done on it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Today, April 11, is Equal Pay Day in Ontario, to recognize that a pay gap still exists between men and women in the province and across the world.

Equal Pay Day serves as a symbolic reminder of the extra time each year that it takes a woman on average to earn as much as a man. It's 2017, and this disadvantage towards women sadly should not still exist.

The women in my riding of Barrie deserve to see change. The women across our province deserve to see change. In the minister's mandate letter from the Premier, she asked him to "lead the development of a wage gap strategy ... to close the wage gap between men and women."

I'm proud to be a member of a government that is taking action on this issue very seriously and is helping to lead the way in Canada. Can the minister please share with this House what he is doing to help improve the working lives of women across the province and close the gender wage gap?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to thank the member from Barrie for that excellent question. Last year, after holding consultations right across this province, we engaged with over 170 stakeholders; hundreds of members of the public, men and women, came out to offer their advice during public town hall sessions; and there were thousands of online submissions.

The Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee released its final report and its final recommendations, and I want to thank them for their hard work. I know that members of the opposition have denigrated that work; I think it's excellent work. As a result of that, we've established a working group now. We've got reps from business, labour, women's advocacy groups and human resources experts. They're going to provide practical feedback.

The first meeting of this group is this Thursday. I look forward to being there. Equal Pay Day really serves as that symbolic reminder of the barrier that still exists for women. As a government, we know it's imperative. The

member from Barrie is absolutely right: We need to close the gender—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for the response. I'm glad to hear that work continues to close the gender wage gap through the development of a gender wage gap working group.

As members of this House know, the gender wage gap still unfairly disadvantages women in my riding of Barrie, across Ontario and in every other jurisdiction. When women workers are treated equitably, everyone benefits.

The number one recommendation from the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee was that government invest in child care, working women and their families. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: What are we doing to address these recommendations?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Minister of the Status of Women.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the hard-working member for this very important question and for her strong advocacy on this issue. It's true that the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee's number one and two recommendations were an immediate investment in child care. And, in the speech from the throne, the government did just that: We announced a plan to create 100,000 new licensed child care spaces. It's historic. It's the right thing to do.

But there is more hard work under way in government, including strengthening the application of gender-based analysis in government decision-making and committing to increasing the number of women on boards. For example, we're among the first jurisdictions to introduce "comply or explain" rules, government targets of 40% for women on provincial agencies and business targets of 30% for women on boards and in senior executive positions.

We must ensure that all women from all walks of life find economic security. There is a need for an integrated, whole-of-government approach. We're working on that.

YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We're learning more and more about the terrible abuse of taxpayer dollars and an unprecedented amount of waste at the York Region District School Board. Trustee travel and spending appears to be out of control—

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sorry, my apologies. To the Premier. Premier, will you put a moratorium on travel for the York Region District School Board trustees?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: For many, many months we've been dealing with the situation at the York Region District School Board. I have heard from parents. I've heard from students and from the community. That is exactly why in January I appointed a set of reviewers,

Sue Herbert and Patrick Case, who have been working with the community to hear those concerns. They have put forward their recommendations.

The reason why we went this route, to an expedited review, is because we know that our schools must be places where all students feel safe, and that any incidences that affect that well-being of the student are addressed, and that we don't shy away from those concerns.

Mr. Speaker, that report has been submitted to me. I am reviewing that report. I will have more to say on that in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: So the minister just acknowledges she's known about it since January, but she didn't put a moratorium in place. Why not?

Former Liberal candidate Loralea Carruthers promised to regain the public's trust when she became chair of the board last December. This travel spending scandal certainly isn't a good step. It appears trustees use the board as a taxpayer-funded travel agent. They jet-setted across Europe with no regard for public funds. This travel is unacceptable and unnecessary.

Will the government commit to reviewing all travel expenses and calling for the funds to be reimbursed?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: The member opposite knows full well that this issue has been brought forward and that we are taking action to address the concerns that have been raised by parents, by students and by the community. That is why I have asked for a review of the leadership of the York Region District School Board, and ensuring that when we hear issues that they are dealt with.

I have heard from many members and colleagues on this side of the House in York region about the concerns that they were hearing from their communities. It is the first time in many months that the member opposite has raised those concerns. I'm happy to stand in this House and tell you the actions that we are taking because those actions are meant to ensure that our students get the best education possible.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Late last year, tenants at 401 Richmond in Toronto received an incredible shock. Their property taxes were about to triple, threatening this cultural hub, which provides below-market rents to arts organizations and creative industries in downtown Toronto.

Taxes were tripling because MPAC does not assess properties like 401 Richmond based on the current use of the property, but on the value of a condo tower MPAC imagines might stand in its place.

The city of Toronto wants a new property tax class for cultural hubs like 401 Richmond. Will the minister enable such a property tax class, and save buildings like 401 Richmond?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. We all value the contributions of not-for-profits and the cultural

community and the art community, especially at 401 Richmond, which, for a long time now, has been providing a great service to our community. We want that to continue.

We also recognize that the city of Toronto has at their disposal the opportunity to provide for some reductions directly. The city has the authority to provide property tax rebates directly to not-for-profit organizations regardless of whether they are the owner or the tenant of the property.

Bottom line: The approval of the province is not required for them to provide the immediate service and rebate to the area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The "highest and best use," which was the term used by MPAC, of 401 Richmond is not to become another condo tower. By providing a home for Toronto's artists and creative industries, 401 Richmond is already serving its highest and best use.

Toronto has specifically asked this minister for the ability to protect such cultural hubs without having to resort to ad hoc property tax workarounds, which is what they've done.

Will the minister finally agree to create a new property tax class for cultural hubs and heritage buildings like 401 Richmond? Help the city of Toronto.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We absolutely want to support 401 Richmond. We want to provide and encourage the city, which, by the way, does have the ability to give a property tax rebate of up to 40% of the property taxes paid by the eligible heritage buildings. As the taxing authority, it is up to the city to decide whether to provide property tax relief to specific heritage buildings within Toronto. They can do that, and we would encourage them to do so.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Recently, we have been hearing members opposite making some false, misleading claims about Ontario's greenhouse industry. Despite what the opposition may believe, the industry is growing and has the full support of our government. We have committed more than \$10.7 million to 440 projects in the greenhouse industry since 2013.

Just last month, I had the pleasure of being joined by Minister Leal at Link Greenhouses in my riding of Durham to announce that the province is investing \$19 million towards a Greenhouse Competitiveness and Innovation Initiative. In addition, through Growing Forward 2, our government launched new project categories.

Minister, can you please explain what else our government is doing to support the greenhouse sector and update—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock. In the member's preamble, he made a comment that I'm not accepting as parliamentary, and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the hard-working member from Durham for the question this morning.

Ontario's greenhouse sector is growing. Today, we learned that NatureFresh Farms is building a new \$400-million distribution centre in wonderful Leamington, Ontario. Recently, Greenhill Produce announced a new \$100-million development that will create 300 new jobs. This builds on the nearly 3,000 acres and 81,000 jobs already in the sector. The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers also expects the industry to keep growing by about 150 acres a year. This is real growth, regardless of what others may say.

We're also partnering with the industry. Just last month, at Link Greenhouses in beautiful Bowmanville, Ontario, our government announced \$19 million in funding to support the Greenhouse Competitiveness and Innovation Initiative. The climate action plan has allocated \$150 million to cover agricultural producers. This is the kind of innovation we're investing in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's good to hear that the greenhouse industry is continuing to expand and invest in my riding of Durham, as well as the rest of our great province.

Just like any other business, there is a wide array of factors that impact this industry's decision to invest in our province. Our government works closely with industry stakeholders, like the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers and more.

One concern we have heard from our industry partners and my constituents is the cost of electricity. The government recently announced our fair hydro plan, which is reducing bills by 25% on average by this summer. Greenhouse owners are wondering whether and how those savings will apply to them. Minister, please share with the House how the fair hydro plan will reduce electricity costs for greenhouse—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I also want to thank the member for the question and for his hard work.

It is a pleasure to be able to speak about our government's fair hydro plan. As members of this House will know, part of our plan involves lowering the threshold for participation in the industrial conservation initiative. Participants in the ICI program can save as much as one third off their electricity costs, and we will be lowering the threshold from one megawatt to 500 kilowatts for many energy-intensive businesses.

I'm pleased to say today that greenhouses will be counted among that group. Any greenhouse that uses more than 500 kilowatts in electricity demand will be eligible for that program.

As members of this House know, Ontario farms are benefiting from Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan. That means for

those greenhouses that don't qualify for the ICI program, they will still be eligible for that 25% reduction as well.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the Minister of Education: On March 28, 2017, in the Legislature, the minister said, "We know that schools play a vital role in the social fabric that ties our great communities together.... Our local schools are really the centre of communities."

Speaker, if the minister truly believes that, will she stop closing schools?

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You don't know when, but I will.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: On this side of the House, we continue to invest in our great education system here in Ontario. In fact, as the Premier said earlier, 810 new schools have been built in this province, including 450 of those in rural communities alone. We have expanded 780 schools significantly, and we will continue to invest in our public education system, because we know that schools are the heart of communities and that we are providing the best education possible.

At the same time, we have to support our local school boards as they make very difficult decisions when there is a need to change a school, for whatever the reason is, in that local community. We want to ensure that they have the resources that they can continuously invest in the education of our students so that they can get the best education—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Minister of Education: There are hundreds of schools being considered for closure by this government. Liberal members missed their opportunity to stand up for students and families when they voted against an immediate moratorium on school closures.

But, Speaker, there's still an opportunity for the government to take ownership and say, "No more school closures." When will this government do the right thing and support our call for an immediate moratorium on school closures?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's important that we don't just look at a one-size-fits-all solution, because we actually know that local communities are going to be responsible for making those decisions locally. That's why we support our school boards.

In fact, in the member opposite's own party, and I quote: "A tough piece of reality for everyone to accept is

that student enrolment is on the decline, which is putting everybody in tough situations. But, we have to stand tall and we have to work with the realities we have in front of us." That was from MPP Lisa Thompson, from the Owen Sound Sun Times.

We are investing in our school communities. In the member's own riding, 11 new and improved schools have been built since 2003. We have to ensure, as we're making these decisions, that they are appropriate for our local community and that we're providing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Constituents are calling my London office to tell me that they can't afford their hydro bills. They are shocked at the rates that they're being charged, and they are desperate for relief.

One particularly heartbreaking story was from a young couple with a baby only a few months old. Because they can't afford their hydro bill, this young mom spends her days at her parents' house to save on time-of-use charges. But that hasn't worked. Their bills haven't changed.

Premier, can you imagine the frustration and the anger these young parents are feeling because they are forced to choose between paying for your government's hydro schemes or providing for their family?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the specifics of our fair hydro plan, but it is exactly because of situations like the one the member opposite has articulated that we knew that even with the measures we had taken—the 8% reduction that was in place as of January 1—we needed to do more. We knew that we needed to do more, so another 17% reduction will mean that that young family will see a 25% reduction on their electricity bill come the summer. It was exactly those situations where families—people were carrying too much of a burden for investments and upgrading of a system that is going to last for generations. We were asking those people to pay now, and a disproportionate amount. We're spreading those costs over a longer period of time, and that's how a 25% reduction will be seen on those bills come September.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, there is no comfort in passing on debt to the next generation.

Premier, this young family lives in a semi-detached—nothing large. They don't have electric heat, nor do they live in their own house during the day. Despite taking drastic measures, like not living in their home during the day, their hydro bills are still way too high.

Premier, you have failed young families like my constituents, and worse, you have put their ability to provide for their child at risk. When will this government take responsibility for their failed energy policies that you are forcing young families to pay for, and when will we see your new Liberal plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's good news for families, like what the honourable member mentioned in relation to our fair hydro plan. Up to 25%, or on average 25% will be coming to actually help families just like them, Mr. Speaker. That's good news for every family right across the province. On top of that, if this family qualifies, if they're low income, we'll make sure that they can get access to the Ontario Electricity Support Program where they will actually see an additional 50% to help them. That's what we're making sure that we're doing: helping every single family, small business and farm in this province through the Ontario fair hydro plan.

On that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, one party has no plan, the other has a plan—vague context, Mr. Speaker—that doesn't take one cent off of anybody's bills. We're doing more than that. We're taking—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for acknowledging me. I want to welcome some guests from Parkinson Canada who are with us here today in the House. Please welcome Daphne FitzGerald, Yvon Trepanier, Jean Keary, Ryan Tripp, Debbie Davis, Jacquie Micallef, Megan Boyle, Paul Scibetta, Wen Xie and Sprague Plato.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: On a point of order: I'd also like to welcome some constituents to the Legislature today from Burlington: Lawrence Stasiuk, Rob Peachey, Natascha Husgard, Johanna Kyte from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects and Blair Chesterton from the Ontario Electrical League. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order: Speaker, I'd like to correct my record. Since 2003 we have invested in 6,300 new education assistants, and since 2013, 900 have been added.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not correcting your record, and I don't want to see that happen again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You said the wrong number? My apologies.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: 2003.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): 2003. Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFER SCHOOL ZONES ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure for second reading of Bill 65.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, take your seats, please.

On February 21, 2017, Mr. Del Duca moved second reading of Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters.

Mr. Flynn has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour of Mr. Flynn's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Natayshak, Taras
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sattler, Peggy
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Singh, Jagmeet
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Maura, Bill	Tabuns, Peter
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	Taylor, Monique
		Thibeault, Glenn
		Vanthof, John
		Vernile, Daine
		Wong, Soo
		Wynne, Kathleen O.
		Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLaren, Jack	Clark, Steve
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Coe, Lorne
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	DiNovo, Cheri
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Fedeli, Victor
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Fife, Catherine
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	French, Jennifer K.
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Gates, Wayne
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Gélinas, France
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Gretzky, Lisa
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 51; the nays are 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Del Duca has moved second reading of Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1157 to 1158.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Del Duca has moved second reading of Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Hoggarth, Ann	Natayshak, Taras
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Del Duca, Steven	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dong, Han	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Duguid, Brad	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
	Vernile, Daine	Vernile, Daine
	Wong, Soo	Wong, Soo
	Wynne, Kathleen O.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Zimmer, David	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Oosterhoff, Sam
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLeod, Lisa	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 68; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So referred.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm sure my wife is watching at home, but today is my 12-year anniversary. I've been

married to my wife for quite some time, and I just want to thank her for being the best partner in life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's called introductions, not brownie points.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: But it works.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm on a roll today. The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so pleased to introduce today the president of CUPE. Fred Hahn is here in the Legislature. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HURON PERTH AGRICULTURE AND WATER FESTIVAL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm proud to announce that last week the town of Seaforth hosted the 25th anniversary of the Huron Perth Agriculture and Water Festival. This annual festival is a fun-filled event that provides grade-school students with hands-on learning opportunities about agriculture and water conservation. This year, the event hosted approximately 575 grade 4 students representing 14 schools from across Huron and Perth.

The purpose of the Agriculture and Water Festival is to encourage students to learn more about and understand the importance of agriculture and water. The amazing volunteers not only help students understand the importance of agriculture and water but also provide them with a foundational knowledge of farming, how farms operate and how farmers are dedicated stewards of the land.

Children who otherwise don't necessarily get the opportunity to interact with farm animals or the agriculture sector are able to expand their knowledge of where their food comes from, as well as what is involved in raising animals and caring for our land. For example, this year's festival featured a wide range of demonstrations, milking, farm tips in terms of safety, and a look at both pork and poultry production.

It is really great to see a collaboration that has devoted 25 years of work to provide the children of Huron and Perth counties the education of the land they live on. I wish to thank the Huron Perth Agriculture and Water Festival in Seaforth, and I wish them many more successful years. Their efforts are so important and valued.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to take the unusual step to say something positive about this Liberal government for a change. I see nothing wrong with saying "thank you" when my community will benefit directly from a government announcement.

In this case, it was the result of a tough round of bargaining between Unifor and the Ford Motor Co. Unifor wouldn't settle a new contract unless Ford Canada committed to a new product at the Essex engine plant in

Windsor. Ford asked the federal and provincial governments to prove that they valued an Ontario automotive industry. The end result is a partnership with more than \$1-billion investment. Ontario is putting up more than \$100 million, and so are the feds.

I wasn't invited to the announcement, Speaker. I would have liked to have been there; it's in my riding. Actually, I was one of the reporters back in the fall of 1978 when Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau turned the sod for that plant.

Windsor, as you know, Speaker, is the cradle of Canada's automotive industry, so I want to put partisan differences aside for a moment. I want to publicly thank Mr. Duguid, the Minister of Economic Development and Growth; Premier Wynne; the federal government; Ford Canada; and especially the leadership at Unifor for making this new investment such a critical priority during their bargaining process.

As my leader, Andrea Horwath, has said, Ontario auto workers deserve a proactive industry-wide strategy from all levels of government that will help protect against future job losses and rebuild a manufacturing base that has been allowed to decline for too many years.

EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, Monsieur le Président. Speaker, I would like to follow in the footsteps of my honourable colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh and would also like to praise this extraordinary and agile Liberal government particularly in the great riding of Etobicoke North. I wanted, Speaker, to indicate to you and to my own residents in Etobicoke North the \$1.7 billion worth of development which is occurring as we speak.

We gave, for example, \$90 million for a magnificent, beautiful jewel-in-the-crown student facility at Humber College. It's a student centre. I had a chance to tour it, and folks are enjoying it and its many, many aspects. I'll detail them at perhaps another time.

We have, from the Ministry of Transportation, infrastructure: eight new stops at the Finch LRT. This alone is a \$1.2-billion project. Humber College, Highway 27, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion, Stevenson, Kipling and Islington: eight new stops, Speaker; count 'em.

We have an approximately \$400-million facility going up, expanding the Etobicoke General Hospital footprint, quadrupling it by 250,000 square feet: everything from an emergency department, critical care, intensive care, cardiorespiratory, neurodiagnostic and so much more.

Speaker, whether we're talking about health care or education or infrastructure or transport, Etobicoke North is on the move.

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today to commemorate the tragedy and triumph that was Vimy Ridge. On Sunday, Canadians came together to celebrate

a victory and to remember those who lost their lives and who sacrificed 100 years ago. The Ottawa Catholic School Board, in particular St. Mark's Catholic High School in my constituency, hung yellow ribbons across the Vimy Memorial Strandherd-Armstrong Bridge.

The Royal Canadian Legion's cadets will be going off to Vimy in November from Manotick, and both the Barrhaven and Manotick Legions commemorated this auspicious day right outside of the Vimy Memorial Bridge. I was fortunate to lay a wreath on behalf of the province of Ontario with my husband, who is former military, and my daughter, whose father and grandfather both served in the Canadian Forces and whose great-grandfather served in World War II and whose great-great-grandfather served at Vimy.

One young lady from my constituency actually got to go to Vimy last week. Her name is Adrianna Winchester, and she goes to the aptly-named John McCrae Secondary School. She sang there with the Ottawa Children's Choir. I want to let Adrianna know—and her among the 10,000 young people who went to Vimy this past Sunday—that we appreciate them acknowledging such an important day in Canadian history and we appreciate the fact that they are carrying the torch that we lost so long ago.

CHARLES C. MCLEAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Michael Mantha: Just yesterday, I was in the town of Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island, visiting CC McLean Public School. The school is one of 10 schools out of 700 applicants that recently won \$25,000 in new technology from Staples Canada as part of an annual contest that integrates a special project in support of the environment.

Speaker, when I walked into Mrs. Jefkins' grade 4/5 class, the students were all smiling. This class is raising Chinook salmon for release into the north channel of Lake Huron. Not only does this project have the support of the school, but also of the entire community of Gore Bay.

I want everyone in this House to subscribe to their YouTube channel and website so we can all follow the journey of this salmon together. This school not only has this creative project that supports the local fishery; they also created a recycling program and a school garden.

The work that is being done in this school is teaching a whole generation of future environmental leaders. I want to quickly thank teacher Heather Jefkins and all her students, Principal Tracey Chapman, Mayors Ron Lane and Ozzy Hunt, Ron Garlinski from Staples Canada, and Ian Anderson from the Gore Bay Fish and Game Club for their support and hard work on this project.

As we cheered yesterday, Mr. Speaker: Go Colts; Go Green. Congratulations.

KATYN MASSACRE AND SMOLENSK AIR DISASTER

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: As a Polish Canadian, I am honoured to rise in the Legislature today to commemo-

rate the 77th anniversary of the Katyn massacre and the seventh anniversary of the Smolensk air disaster.

1510

For the people of Poland, Katyn is an example of the criminal acts of the Soviet system against the Polish nation. In April and May 1940, more than 20,000 Polish nationals were murdered. This decimated the ranks of the Polish military ruling class and intelligentsia.

Mr. Speaker, this tragic event has personal meaning to me. Every year, I remember my two great-uncles who were murdered in Katyn. My colleague the member from Kingston and the Islands also had a great-uncle who was slaughtered there. Their losses remind me of the horrors of war and the high price of freedom and defence against subjugation. Remembering acts like this should strengthen Canadians' resolve against all forms of hatred and reinforce our commitment to respect and peace.

I'd like to take this opportunity to also remember the 96 people, including Polish President Lech Kaczyński, his wife and high-ranking officials, who were lost in the Smolensk air disaster in 2010. This disaster happened as the president and government officials were en route to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. The plane crashed near the airport's runway in Smolensk.

Lastly, this past Sunday, Premier Wynne, MPP Baker and I marched with Poland's consul general, Grzegorz Morawski, and dozens of members of Toronto's Polish community from St. Casimir's Church to the Katyn monument in Parkdale-High Park. This was a very important event for the Polish community that demonstrated that both the Katyn massacre and the Smolensk air disaster are two tragedies that will never be forgotten.

CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Canadian Hearing Society provides important services to culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing persons and advocates for over 36,000 clients across Ontario.

In the past, I have worked with the board of directors at the Canadian Hearing Society in Ontario and know how much Ontarians rely on the services they deliver. That is why it saddens me to see the ongoing labour dispute that is negatively affecting these individuals.

It has been five weeks since workers at the Canadian Hearing Society, many of them deaf or disabled themselves, were forced off the job, and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight.

Let me tell you how this situation is affecting people. Deaf individuals are without qualified interpreters and are losing employment opportunities, as well as access to meetings important to their health, finances and every other aspect of their lives.

Unemployed individuals are without specialized employment professionals to advocate for them, which compounds the disadvantages they already face when seeking employment. Seniors who cannot hear are literally shut in their homes in isolation, while also dealing with chronic health issues.

We have a father who is deaf and has stage 4 cancer. He has been without interpreting services in hospitals for weeks. The son has had to take time off work to interpret for his father during oncologist meetings, trying to interpret complex medical issues that he is not qualified to do. It's unfortunate that he's forced into this situation.

I would like to take this opportunity to call on the government to do what they can to end this dispute as soon as possible and focus on the importance of these services to Ontarians who have been denied.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Bob Delaney: The month of April is Parkinson's Awareness Month. Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disease. It affects movement. Movement is normally controlled by dopamine, a chemical that carries signals between the nerves and the brain. When cells that normally produce dopamine die, the symptoms of Parkinson's appear. Parkinson's disease affects more than movement: impairing speech, mood, eating and drinking, sleep and cognitive changes.

There is no known cause or cure for Parkinson's disease. Today, an estimated 40,000 Ontarians live with Parkinson's disease. As Ontario's population ages, the number of people with Parkinson's will grow, as will cases of dementia and clinical depression in people with Parkinson's.

Many Parkinson's drugs temporarily replenish dopamine or mimic the action of dopamine. These medications generally help reduce muscle rigidity, improve speed and coordination of movement, and lessen tremor.

Coping with Parkinson's disease also involves good nutrition, active living, being safe at home and making some simple changes at mealtime, among other options that a Parkinson's patient and his or her doctor and specialists will discuss.

In Ontario, Parkinson Canada offers 100 support groups and serves more than 8,000 families each year. Across Canada, Parkinson Canada helps ensure that no one faces Parkinson's alone.

ANNABEL SLAIGHT

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is my pleasure today to rise to congratulate my constituent and a long-time community advocate, Annabel Slaight, on her appointment to the Order of Canada. I am thrilled to recognize this achievement in 2017, marking both Canada's 150th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the Order of Canada.

The Order of Canada is one of our country's highest civilian honours, recognizing outstanding achievement, dedication to the community, and service to the nation. Her citation reads as follows: "For nurturing a passion for science and nature among generations of Canadian children."

I have known Annabel for a number of years. She is, without doubt, a strong activist who gets things done. She co-founded the Ladies of the Lake environmental group.

While the group is open to men, she notes that women have a different way of doing things.

The Latin motto for the Order of Canada means "They desire a better country." This rings true for Annabel. She has a clear commitment to our community and local environment but also to the broader Lake Simcoe watershed.

It is fitting to celebrate her achievement in the Legislature in April, the same month that we celebrate Earth Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members.

I want to take just a very short moment to provide you with a gentle reminder that we do have word counts on the number of minutes that we are allowed to speak. Sometimes they're being stretched.

I really do hate interrupting you if you're doing a good-news story or dedicating a statement to a lost friend. But I'm going to ask all caucuses, once again, to spread it out that one minute 30 is what has been allotted for the statements. I appreciate you staying inside of that time frame. I appreciate it very much.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 11, 2017, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EQUAL PAY DAY

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the Legislature today to recognize April 11 as Equal Pay Day in Ontario. In observance of that day, I'm honoured to share the floor this afternoon with my colleague the Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris, minister of Ontario's first-ever stand-alone Ministry of the Status of Women.

We are also joined, Speaker, you will note as you look around, by some people who are adorned in red today. It sometimes is a happy symbol, but today I think it's a bit of a sad symbol. The red that I'm wearing on my tie, and that others are wearing on their clothing, is symbolic of the fact that women in this province, and women around the world, when it comes to gender equity and pay equity, are still in the red, and something needs to be done about that.

I'm joined by some people who have come from my own community, some people whom I've worked with on this issue over the years. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for being here.

From Advancement of Women Halton, Tina Agrell and Anne Douglas have joined us today. From the Canadian Federation of University Women, Ontario Council, Sandra Thomson and Teri Shaw have joined us in the gallery. From UFCW, Ontario regional director Debora De Angelis, Zenee Maceda, and Emmanuelle Lopez are here. Fay Faraday has joined us as chair of the Equal Pay Coalition, and she's joined by a lot of other members of that coalition. Mary Jane Stitt is going to play a major role in what I hope are some major advancements when it comes to dealing with this issue. Fred Hahn, I know, is here from CUPE; I'd recognize Fred anywhere.

I'd just like the House to warmly welcome these folks to Queen's Park.

1520

I really want to acknowledge the women, the men, the employers, the employees, the unions and the advocates who work each and every day, and have worked for a very long time, to promote gender equity in our communities.

This is a day that is observed each year in countries around the world to recognize that the pay disparity that still exists between men and women is something we need to solve. Equal Pay Day serves as a very symbolic reminder of the extra time each year that it takes a woman, on average, to simply earn as much money as a man.

Thirty years ago, this Legislature unanimously passed the Pay Equity Act. It was a massive achievement; it was a historic achievement; but it was never meant to be the sole solution to close the gender wage gap.

The gender wage gap is very complex. Its existence is due to many variables. This fact was reinforced by the research that was done recently by the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee that I established and which provided its final report to me late last summer.

Closing that gender wage gap in Ontario is a priority for this government, and we have continued to work on this important issue. The Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee conducted its research and its consultations to better understand all the factors behind the gender wage gap in this province, and how we might address them.

Last May, the steering committee concluded their work, and a comprehensive report was issued by that group in August.

I want to thank the steering committee again for the valuable work that it provided to the province of Ontario.

Their findings were far-reaching. The gender wage gap continues to affect all women in this province, and everybody in our society has a role to play in closing it. We're working with our partners outside of government and across government to develop a comprehensive strategy that is going to close that gap and is going to

strengthen the economy of Ontario by simply eliminating those barriers that prevent women's full participation in Ontario's workforce.

Many here may remember that on November 24 of last year, we acknowledged the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the Pay Equity Act. At that event, I announced that the province of Ontario would move forward with a Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee report recommendation to develop an effective, government-wide strategy that is going to close that gender wage gap in this province.

One of the key areas of focus is a review of Ontario's pay equity legislation: Is it still relevant? Does it need to be updated? Without a doubt, active enforcement of the Pay Equity Act will lead to a narrowing of the gap and will build a more prosperous and fair Ontario for everybody in this province, regardless of gender.

In the last three years, for example, the Pay Equity Office, which is an agency of the Ministry of Labour, has reached more than 14,000 businesses with pay equity compliance information, and has concluded approximately 900 pay equity investigations, just over the past three years. In its most recent reporting year, in 2015-16, almost 1,900 women employees received more than \$6.8 million in adjustments stemming from investigations by this office.

But the work of the Ontario Pay Equity Commission is only a part of this solution—a major part, albeit only a part. Its work, combined with other initiatives, will better address the root causes of the gap: Why do we have the gender wage gap in the first place?

We have recently formed a working group of representatives from business, labour, women's advocacy groups and human resource experts, who are going to provide practical input on very specific issues and initiatives as our government moves forward with our strategy. The group's first meeting is taking place on Thursday, and I'm looking forward to being at this very first meeting.

The strategy is building on other government actions that are designed to support women in Ontario and their families. It includes expanding access to licensed child care by adding 100,000 new spaces. It includes increasing the number of women on boards and in senior management positions in Ontario. It also includes working to end sexual violence and harassment in workplaces and communities across this province, where it simply doesn't belong.

We're also talking to our federal partners about issues under their jurisdiction. I hope to work together with my federal colleagues on developing the right mix of policies, the right mix of programs and legislation, to support women in the labour market in this province.

Speaker, we've had a busy year. The work continues. When released and implemented, Ontario's strategy to close the gender wage gap will improve women's economic outcomes and help ensure that our economy continues to grow.

This all began in the Premier's mandate letter to me about two years ago. What the Premier asked publicly

was that I work with the then minister responsible for women's issues, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, to lead the development of a wage gap strategy, to close the gap between men and women in the context of the 21st-century economy. It's a complex task, but it's a crucial task, and it's one we need to get right. It's one that Minister Naidoo-Harris and I are determined to continue working on together.

As requested by the Premier in that mandate letter, the Ministry of Labour has also undertaken a broader review of Ontario's system of employment standards and labour relations, and it's developing reforms, as we speak, that are going to reflect the realities of working in the modern economy today. That initiative is called the Changing Workplaces Review. It involves a consideration of issues that impact the livelihoods of all vulnerable workers in Ontario, including women, and the development of reforms that are going to improve those livelihoods while supporting competitive business in this province.

Speaker, we appointed two independent special advisers to lead the Changing Workplaces Review. Two phases of public consultation are being conducted and concluded. The special advisers have delivered their final report and their recommendations to me. They're being translated and made accessible as we speak.

Today we recognize the critical role that women play in our economy, while we reflect on the simply unacceptable reality that women continue to earn less than men. Today, Equal Pay Day is a reminder that barriers to women's achievement—to the young girls who are just growing up in our society—still exist, and they shouldn't. We must continue working together to ensure that the important contributions that women make to our economy in the province of Ontario achieve full value and are recognized properly.

Speaker, we're making progress. Yet, as long as there's a wage gap, we all have more work to do.

Our goal at the end of this is a province where all Ontarians have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential in the modern-day labour market while being fairly compensated for their work and being major contributors to the economic growth of this province. Closing the gender wage gap is something we simply need to get right. It's a key part of this goal.

If Ontario is going to be the place that is the land of opportunity, it needs to be the land of opportunity for all, regardless of your gender.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further statements by ministries?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of Labour, and I am pleased to join him today in rising to mark Equal Pay Day. I also want to welcome to the House members of the Equal Pay Coalition and other members who are here with us today.

Speaker, this is an important day. It's important because for many women around the world, inequality exists in the workforce.

As Ontario's first Minister of the Status of Women, I want you to know that I am passionate about making sure

there is economic empowerment and security for all women and girls in this province. Yet, at this moment in our history, economic equality remains a real and serious problem for women the world over. It's hard to believe that in this day and age, women, on average, earn less than men. The numbers tell the story. In fact, recent data from Statistics Canada reports that nationally, women earn only 74 cents for every dollar earned by men on annual earnings. In Ontario, measured by hourly earnings, women continue to earn approximately 13% less than their male counterparts. This gap is even wider for indigenous, transgender and newcomer women, and women with disabilities.

The reality is, when women don't have access to the same opportunities as men, we all lose. The gender wage gap means that there are significant losses not only for women, but for the entire economy. The gender wage gap means Ontario's families have less disposable income and the gender wage gap means that women aren't being treated fairly. This is simply not acceptable.

1530

I'd like to take a moment now to recognize the tireless efforts of the people in this province who are working daily to change this. I'm working with them, along with my colleague the Minister of Labour, to develop a strategy to close the gender wage gap. Why? Because it's absolutely the right thing to do.

For women in Ontario, our vision of economic opportunity and security is directly connected to achieving full gender equality. It's about allowing women to reach their full potential.

I want you to know that gender equality is something that both Premier Kathleen Wynne and our government believe in very strongly. Under her leadership, the Ontario government has taken steps across all ministries and in every sector to build up the role of women in our economy. That's why she took the historic step of appointing me the first Ontario Minister of the Status of Women.

Last year, we announced that Ontario is setting gender diversity targets to ensure that more women have the opportunity to reach top leadership positions at provincial boards and agencies, as well as private sector boards. We have set a government target of at least 40% women representation on the boards of every provincial board and agency by the end of 2019. We are also asking businesses to set a target of appointing 30% women to their boards of directors by the end of 2017.

Why do we ask this, Speaker? Well, because gender diversity and corporate leadership have real and very measurable benefits. Having women in key leadership positions inspires others to dream, and opens doors for everyone. That's so important for a fair society and for our young people. We know gender diversity brings talent, stronger performance and innovation to the table. We know Ontario's economy can be stronger with women's full participation and equality. And we know it's the right thing to do.

But we also know that while economic success and security are important in boardrooms and executive roles,

success is also as basic as economic independence, and absolutely, women want to create that for themselves more than ever. In fact, female-owned small businesses are a growing segment of the Canadian economy. Women are playing a key role in driving innovation, job creation and economic growth on their own. They are also an important part of Ontario's economic engine. Women in Canada now represent almost 39% of all of those self-employed, an increase of almost 22% since 1976. Our government is taking action to raise that number even higher. We established the micro-lending program in 2012 to help low-income women start and grow their own businesses. We're giving them a lift. Since then, the program has offered entrepreneurship and financial literacy training to more than 1,700 women. And that's not all. There are a lot of new opportunities. This has given low-income women the chance to establish themselves as entrepreneurs and is helping them gain economic independence.

Speaker, the Ministry of the Status of Women also supports programs that help low-income women gain new opportunities through training in the skilled trades and in information technology. Since 2003, more than 2,600 women have participated in training programs to help them get better-paying jobs.

We know that the sectors and jobs where women often work are traditionally undervalued, in comparison to men. That's the reality. In other words, the gender wage gap is wider in these instances. So this year, we are investing \$2 million in training programs that will help women find jobs in trades such as carpentry, industrial millwright or in computer repair—in areas where you see fewer women working. Absolutely, this is making a difference. Through these programs, thousands of women have been able to explore new career options, climb the ladder and improve their financial independence.

But we know that having the right job skills is only part of the picture.

The reality for many women is that they don't have time to focus on their careers because they are often the primary caregivers in their families. This is a role that is demanding and frequently unpaid and, in many cases, affects their ability to pursue other goals.

That's why, last September, we committed to creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers over the next five years. It's a historic commitment and will double the number of high-quality licensed child care spaces for children up to four years old. And it will allow more women to participate in the workforce.

Speaker, we're making progress, but it's clear that more needs to be done. That's why our government is developing a government-wide approach to the economic empowerment of women of all economic levels. Our goal is to ensure that every woman and girl in Ontario is empowered to succeed, with equal access to economic and social opportunities in all sectors and communities.

As we mark 30 years of the Pay Equity Act in Ontario, we look ahead to further achievements for women. Let's

celebrate that Ontario and Canada are on track to achieve women's economic empowerment. We have equal rights and human rights. We have education and opportunities. We see the change that needs to be made and we stand up to make it happen.

We will not rest until women in Ontario achieve full gender equality and are empowered economically to be all that they can be. This is the right thing to do. Our government is on track.

It was a great pleasure and honour for me to be at the United Nations on a special commission on the status of women and the economic empowerment of women, and to be able to talk about some of the things that Ontario is doing when it comes to empowering our women and girls in this province because, when women succeed, we all succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries. Therefore, it's time for responses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today on Equal Pay Day to speak on behalf of my caucus as the Progressive Conservative critic for women's issues. Equal Pay Day is an annual event that encourages dialogue over the gender wage gap in Ontario.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Pay Equity Commission for being a constant advocate for this issue. I recently had a very productive meeting with the commissioner and want to thank her for bringing this important issue to the forefront.

Once again, I'm glad that we're here talking about pay equity today, but this is not simply a day of celebration. It is a day to look back at what we have done and to look forward to the work that still needs to be done.

Thirty years ago, the Pay Equity Act received royal assent and passed into law. It received support from all three parties. Unfortunately, in recent years there has been a lack of real progress. The women of this province deserve equal pay for work of equal value, and it's concerning to me that this government doesn't appear to think that this is a priority.

For example, it was only in January of this year that the government established a separate status of women ministry and named a dedicated Minister of the Status of Women. It is strange that this did not happen sooner. While the labour minister's working group on the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee will meet this week, it has taken the minister nearly a year to get around to setting up this meeting after having received the report from the steering committee. Meanwhile, the Pay Equity Commission's budget is the lowest it's ever been under this Liberal government.

Still, the Pay Equity Office is working hard to address the real issue of pay equity in this province, and they have done some great work so far. In 2015-16, the Pay Equity Office investigated over 300 workplaces and secured almost \$7 million in owed wages for Ontario women. However, there is only so much that can be done when your budget is at an all-time low.

We have seen this government congratulate themselves when it comes to pay equity, but the gender wage

gap has only improved by 6% since the act was passed 30 years ago. While the government drags out its review and consultation processes, hard-working Ontario women are still facing unfairness.

Earlier today, the Minister of Labour suggested that we on this side were somehow denigrating the work of the Gender Wage Gap Steering Committee. Nothing could be further from the truth. I want to thank those members who are here with us today. What we want is for this government to take their own committee seriously and actually put forward a plan to implement the recommendations they made rather than prolonging the consultations.

Women in Ontario fill a variety of occupations and professions, and they are often the people responsible for taking care of the children and the house. In fact, one of the biggest concerns I hear from women in my riding and across the province is how they're going to pay their hydro bills and how they're going to make ends meet, whether it's going to be the food bank or the grocery store this week.

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And yet women still are not making as much as they should for the work that they are doing, even in the public sector. It's unfortunate that the government doesn't seem to want to act to make life easier for Ontario's hard-working women.

I call on the government to do better. I ask that the government work with us, that we collaborate as members of this Legislature to honour the work done in 1987 by all three political parties, who passed this act unanimously. Specifically, I'm asking that the government convene a committee to work through the spring and summer, to get on with the job of addressing the gender wage gap.

We need to use the recommendations submitted by the gender wage gap strategy committee a year ago to review the Pay Equity Act and make the necessary amendments to advance this issue. I can see that the Minister of Labour is smiling over there, so I hope that's a positive note that he may take this information and advice seriously.

But I can assure you that the PC caucus will work hard to help provide the government with the direction it needs to take in order to amend the Pay Equity Act, so that it can advance the cause of equal pay in the province of Ontario. I say let's get on with it. Consultation, consultation: Let's get some real work done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise as NDP women's issues critic to respond to the minister's statement on Equal Pay Day, a day we are recognizing because of the efforts of my colleague the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Applause.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes. NDP caucus members are wearing red today in solidarity with women across the province who remain in the red 30 years after pay equity legislation was passed in Ontario. Without the resources

for effective enforcement, the Pay Equity Act has failed to achieve what so many hoped for. Instead of narrowing the wage gap, the gap has hardened at close to 30%. It is as wide as 57% for indigenous women and recent immigrant women, 46% for women with disabilities and up to 39% for racialized women.

Immediate action is needed now, which is why I have filed a motion calling on the government to fully adopt the Equal Pay Coalition's 12 steps to close the gender wage gap by 2025, to increase funding for pay equity enforcement and compliance, and to pass pay transparency legislation. These are actions that can be taken right now, when this government tables its spring budget and before the Legislature rises for the summer.

The Equal Pay Coalition's 12 steps to close the gender wage gap are critically important because they identify the systemic barriers that exist to the achievement of pay equality and situate the recommendations of the closing-the-gender-wage-gap steering committee within a human rights context. Wage equality is more than the legal obligation of employers; it is a fundamental human right that must never be put aside for reasons of cost or convenience.

While several of the coalition's 12 steps are referenced in the steering committee's final report, such as the need for affordable and accessible child care, the Equal Pay Coalition outlines other steps that are essential to close the gap, such as addressing gender-based violence, raising the minimum wage and promoting access to collective bargaining for women workers.

We know that women who experience intimate-partner violence are much more likely to work in precarious jobs, to change jobs frequently or to be out of the labour market altogether. That is why paid leave for domestic violence and sexual violence, as is proposed by my Bill 26, is so important. Not only does it provide a key pathway out of a violent relationship, but it also allows women to maintain their employment.

We know that women make up the majority of minimum-wage workers, especially those who are the most vulnerable and experience the widest gaps. That is why the Ontario NDP is supporting the call of the Equal Pay Coalition and the \$15 and Fairness campaign for an immediate \$15 minimum wage.

We know that unionized workplaces are much more equal than non-unionized workplaces, and that any gains that have been made in closing the gender wage gap are largely because of the increased unionization of women. This is why the private member's bill proposed by my colleague the member from Welland on fairness for first contracts is so vital.

In addition to the coalition's 12 steps, there is an urgent need to increase funding for the Pay Equity Commission and provide the resources necessary to actually enforce the act. The commission's budget was cut in half under the Conservatives in 1997 and has been flat-lined by the Liberals over the last decade.

Every employer with more than 10 employees has a legal obligation to comply with the act, but there are

simply not enough staff to proactively monitor compliance, and it often takes years for an order to be issued. As a result, the commission's own reports estimate that more than 50% of Ontario employers are not complying with their legal pay equity obligations.

Finally, there is a need to pass pay transparency legislation, as other jurisdictions are doing, to shine a light on discriminatory pay practices in public and private sector workplaces across the province. The sunshine list gives us a glimpse into how the highest-income women are faring in the broader public sector. It shows that only 25% of those on that list are women.

After 30 years, it is clear that much more than pay equity legislation is needed. Pay transparency legislation, with protection from reprisal for workers who disclose their salaries, is the necessary next step to ensure accountability in pay practices and to close the gender wage gap.

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario drivers aged 80 and over must complete group education sessions, driver record reviews, vision tests and non-computerized in-class assessment in order to renew their licences; and

"Whereas in Cornwall and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry classes have been cancelled without notice due to staff shortages; and

"Whereas seniors are forced to drive needlessly and wait at offices for temporary licences, which is neither productive nor fair to clients; and

"Whereas seniors in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who require a functional assessment must drive to Ottawa or Smiths Falls and complete driving tests in a stressful and unfamiliar environment; and

"Whereas the fee for functional assessment services can be over \$800, far beyond the budget of a fixed-income household; and

"Whereas it is the government's duty to serve Ontario residents locally and conveniently;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—to deliver group education sessions and assessments on a walk-in basis at an existing facility such as the Cornwall DriveTest Centre; and

"—to work proactively with health providers located in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry to guarantee the delivery of functional assessment services within their jurisdiction; and

"—to cover functional assessment services under the Ontario Health Insurance Program."

I agree with this petition. I will pass it off to page Kishan.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas at any given time there are an estimated one million people suffering from eating disorders in Canada;

"Whereas the mental health system in Ontario is fragmented and is failing to provide the necessary supports to those suffering;

"Whereas eating disorders have the highest mortality rates of any mental illness;

"Whereas three of four youth suffering from mental illness in Ontario do not receive treatment;

"Whereas the morbidity of eating disorders is extensive and the life expectancy of individuals with anorexia nervosa is 20 to 25 years less than would normally be expected;

"Whereas Ontario's Auditor General reported that the Ontario government spent \$10 million sending 127 youth to the United States for services not offered in Ontario;

"Whereas that \$10 million could have" been spent to help "more than 500 people suffering from eating disorders here in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately pass Bill 78, Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act, 2016;

"To create a provincial strategy to deal with the devastating effects of eating disorders as a frequently misunderstood mental illness;

"To invest the \$10 million used to send people to other countries for services into Ontario so that all Ontarians suffering from eating disorders are able to access the mental health services and supports they need" here in Ontario.

I sign this petition and give it to page Charlotte to deliver.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I attach my name to that, Speaker, and will pass this to page Matthew.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition, and I'll read it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas since 2006, the Auditor General of Ontario had been responsible for reviewing all government advertising to ensure it was not partisan; and

“Whereas in 2015, the Wynne government watered down the legislation, removing the ability of the Auditor General to reject partisan ads and essentially making the Auditor General a rubber stamp; and

“Whereas the Wynne government has since run ads such as those for the Ontario Pension Plan that were extremely partisan in nature; and

“Whereas the Wynne government is currently using taxpayers' money to run partisan hydro ads; and

“Whereas the government did not feel the need to advertise to inform the people of Ontario of any of the many hydro rate increases; and

“Whereas history shows that the Wynne and McGuinty governments have increased ad spending in the year preceding a general election;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately reinstate the Auditor General's authority to review all government advertising for partisan messages before the ads run.”

I have signed this, Mr. Speaker, and I'm giving it to Matthew.

LACTATION SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank Michelle Angelini, a lactation consultant at London Health Sciences Centre, for collecting names on this petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas premature birth is the leading cause of infant mortality in Canada and many children born preterm experience adverse events at the beginning of their lives that cause lasting problems and contribute to increased provincial health care costs; and

“Whereas providing optimal nutrition support for preterm infants helps improve clinical outcomes, and a growing body of evidence demonstrates that the best way to feed premature infants is with an exclusive human milk diet; and

“Whereas the rates of breast milk provision are more than 70% at hospitals where breast pumps are provided free of charge for both hospital and home use, compared to 40% at hospitals where pumps are not provided; and

“Whereas the provision of breast milk pump loaner programs through hospitals represents long-term health care savings for the province of Ontario through the prevention of chronic illness;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To immediately establish a free province-wide hospital-based breast pump loan program for mothers of infants born under 34 weeks gestational age.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further petitions?

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Yvan Baker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I'm going to pass this petition on to page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further petitions?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas” Collingwood “general and marine hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space; and

“Whereas a building condition assessment found that major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can't be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

"Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

"Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space;

"Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community."

I certainly agree with this petition and will sign it.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government needs to strengthen primary care as the foundation of the health care system to achieve health system transformation goals of Patients First; and

"Whereas research shows that interprofessional primary health care delivers better outcomes for people and better value for money; and

"Whereas an investment in primary care will help address recruitment and retention challenges, build strong interprofessional primary care teams and ensure high-quality people-centred primary health care delivery in Ontario; and

"Whereas over 7,500 staff in over 400 community health centres, family health teams, aboriginal health access centres and nurse practitioner-led clinics are being paid below rates recommended in 2012 and as a result are facing challenges recruiting and retaining health providers, including nurse practitioners, dietitians, registered nurses, health promoters and managers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in interprofessional primary health care teams with a commitment of \$130 million annualized, with an implementation plan over two years, to ensure interprofessional primary health care teams can effectively retain and recruit staff."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Sophie to bring down to the Clerks' table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. James J. Bradley: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

"Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

"Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

"Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians."

I sign this petition as I am in complete agreement.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government needs to strengthen primary care as the foundation of the health care system to achieve health system transformation goals of Patients First; and

"Whereas research shows that interprofessional primary health care delivers better outcomes for people and better value for money; and

"Whereas an investment in primary care will help address recruitment and retention challenges, build strong interprofessional primary care teams and ensure high-quality people-centred primary health care delivery in Ontario; and

"Whereas over 7,500 staff in over 400 community health centres, family health teams, aboriginal health access centres and nurse practitioner-led clinics are being paid below rates recommended in 2012 and as a result are facing challenges recruiting and retaining health providers, including chiropodists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, health promoters, occupational therapists, psychologists, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, mental health and social workers, physician assistants, managers and administration;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in interprofessional primary health care teams with a commitment of \$130 million annualized, with an implementation plan over two years, to ensure interprofessional primary health care teams can effectively retain and recruit staff."

Brought to me by Marina Hodson, the executive director of Kawartha North Family Health Team.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Community Living Guelph Wellington has a significant pay equity obligation;

“Whereas direct support workers have experienced and continue to be threatened with reductions in hours of work and layoffs resulting in staffing reductions;

“Whereas the quality and level of service to the individuals supported has been compromised;

“Whereas base funding to developmental services organizations in Ontario has been frozen for over five years;

“Whereas pay equity is a human right;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To direct the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide Community Living Guelph Wellington with one-time emergency funding to ensure services and staffing are maintained at reasonable levels;

“(2) To renew yearly funding increases at least at the rate of inflation for all developmental service organizations in the 2017 budget.”

I couldn’t agree with this petition more, and will sign it and send it to the table with page Angel.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I wish to present a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly referencing the update of Ontario fluoridation legislation.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel” etc.; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and ... other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health

Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I will sign that and pass that to page Charlotte.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Mrs. McGarry moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to Mrs. McGarry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I’ll be sharing my time with the minister responsible for northern development and mines.

Today I have the honour, on behalf of my constituents of Cambridge, of rising in my place to begin third reading on the proposed Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, or Bill 39. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank Minister Mauro and his staff, who helped develop this piece of legislation, as well as the staff in my ministry and our ministry office.

I had the privilege of introducing the bill to this Legislature in October of last year on behalf of myself and my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As the provincial ministry responsible for the management of aggregate resources, I would once again like to speak to the aggregate resources side of this legislation.

The Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, if passed, would amend the Aggregate Resources Act and allow our province to have a modern framework to oversee the management of aggregate resources in Ontario. Bill 39 aims to modernize and strengthen the regulation of aggregate pits and quarries in Ontario, improve environmental accountability and oversight, update fees and royalties, and enhance information and participation in the application process. These proposed changes balance economic growth with job creation and the responsibility to protect vital resources like farmland, water and air. Passing this proposed legislation would allow for a modern aggregate resources framework for Ontario’s future.

Ontario is Canada’s most populous province. It has long been the economic engine that powers the country. As one of the pillars of our provincial economy, the aggregates industry has helped literally build our province and, by extension, our nation. Since our province’s

formation 150 years ago, the industry has contributed to the creation of strong communities and world-class cities in Ontario. It currently supports 9,000 direct and 9,600 indirect jobs in Ontario. It contributes almost \$1.4 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product and supports our province's construction industry.

Speaker, Ontario's population is expected to grow by 4.2 million people by the year 2041, and our infrastructure needs to grow with it. Modernizing public infrastructure and building a seamless transportation network will help Ontario to meet the needs of a growing population and strengthen our economy. The Ontario government is continuing its commitment to make the largest infrastructure investment in its history, in hospitals, schools, roads, public transit and bridges. The infrastructure needed for this growth will require a steady, consistent and accessible supply of aggregate resources.

At the same time, the Ontario government is very mindful that aggregate is a finite resource that requires proper management to ensure its long-term availability to all of society. In order to continue to meet the expected demand in the future, it's important for Ontario to have a modern, effective and efficient framework for the management of aggregates. This proposed legislation, if passed, would allow for such a framework.

We need to balance economic growth with the responsibility to protect other vital resources like farmland, water and air. Speaker, this draft legislation is just one part of a comprehensive package of reforms that would take effect over time. Bill 39 sets out proposed changes that will help us to modernize and strengthen the Aggregate Resources Act policy framework; the legislation, regulations, provincial standards and policies.

The changes to legislation are proposed to occur first, in this bill, followed by changes to regulations and provincial standards. The proposed changes aim to address concerns from the public, stakeholders and indigenous communities regarding the management of aggregate operations in the province.

I'd like to remind you of some of the main features of this proposed legislation.

Firstly, this legislation would provide the framework for stronger oversight in the management of aggregate operations. This would be accomplished through the introduction of new, enhanced tools for managing existing and future sites under the ARA. These new tools will help us deal with non-commercial and low-risk extraction activities more efficiently; for example, the extraction of aggregate for agricultural land improvement and small amounts for personal use. This change will allow the ministry to better focus its resources on larger aggregate extraction activities like commercial aggregate operations.

Stronger oversight would also result from strengthened enforcement and offence provisions, including increasing maximum fines to \$1 million, plus an additional \$100,000 per day for each day the offence occurs; eliminating the minimum fine to allow the use of tickets under the Provincial Offences Act for minor

offences; and clearer offence provisions for false reporting.

Most of the aggregate we use in Ontario comes from private land in southern Ontario, but the Aggregate Resources Act also provides a framework for managing aggregate resources and operations on crown land.

Secondly, this legislation would provide the framework for updated fees and royalties. This framework would set the stage for equalizing fees between crown land and private land; charging a royalty on aggregate permits that also have a mining lease; changing fee allocations in the future; indexing fees and royalties to ensure they remain current into the future; and requiring existing fees for applications, amendments, transfers etc. to be established in regulation.

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Thirdly, this bill would allow for enhanced environmental accountability for aggregate sites. It would do this by enabling the ministry to direct existing sites to conduct and submit the types of studies and reports that are required for new applications; require existing sites to provide information related to the operation of a pit or quarry; and add conditions to existing sites to implement a source protection plan under the Clean Water Act. It would also create the flexibility to require customized plans to establish study and consultation requirements for unique applications, and clarify, for new operations, that impacts to drinking water sources be considered when making decisions for new licences and wayside permits.

Lastly, the legislation would support improved information and participation in the application and amendment processes. It would do this in three ways:

(1) It would recognize that the ministry must consider whether adequate consultation with indigenous communities has been carried out, before exercising power under the act that relates to licences or permits.

(2) It would standardize provisions for amending site plans and approval conditions across all approval types, and requiring the process for those requests to be set out in regulation.

(3) It would provide increased authority to require operators to keep records and to file reports, including better reporting on rehabilitation.

Future regulatory and policy changes for applications and amendments will also support improved participation of indigenous communities. For example, the Blueprint included a proposal to encourage more pre-consultation with communities before an application proposal is submitted, and also require that the proponent provide separate documentation of notification and consultation activities undertaken with indigenous communities.

As we move forward in drafting new regulations, we will ensure that there are many opportunities for the public to continue to provide feedback on new regulatory measures and changes to current policies.

Should this bill be passed by the Legislature, some key changes would come into effect immediately. These include:

—maximum fines of up to \$1 million, plus an additional \$100,000 per day for each day the offence occurs;

—establishing clear offence provisions for submitting false or misleading information in a report or in information that is required under the act, the regulations, a site plan, or licence or permit; and

—royalty payments for future sites that also have a mining lease.

A series of other changes would come into effect at a later date, including new provisions for site plan amendments, and the ability to direct existing sites to submit information about their operation, or conduct and submit the types of studies and reports that are required for all new applications.

Speaker, this proposed legislation before you was the result of many, many months of co-operation and dialogue, and was informed by an extensive and thorough consultation process. This enabled the collection of invaluable input from many stakeholders, indigenous communities and other interested parties in an open and transparent way.

I would like to recognize the significant contributions made by those organizations that participated in our consultation processes and provided written submissions. Their input has helped shape and strengthen this piece of legislation to where it stands today at third reading.

These parties include municipalities; agricultural, environmental and community organizations; industry groups; indigenous communities; and the public—organizations like the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, a long-standing partner with my ministry for many years, and Gravel Watch Ontario, a coalition composed of citizens' groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals across Ontario; agricultural organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, good afternoon. I'm not sure that we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will ask the Clerks' table to do a count.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A quorum is now present.

I return to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to continue debate.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Agricultural organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario; environmental stakeholders, including Environmental Defence and the Canadian Environmental Law Association—strong advo-

cates for environmental protection—and Conservation Ontario, which represents and advocates for the interests of the province's 36 conservation authorities—all provided valuable feedback on behalf of their members and thousands of Ontario residents.

Likewise, indigenous communities and organizations have provided meaningful input, from the very start, to this current major milestone.

Ontario's municipalities have been engaged with my ministry on this matter since the fall of 2014. They play a very important role in managing aggregate resources on private land under the Planning Act.

All of these groups, Speaker, have been very active in our consultation process, and although they have different positions on this issue, they each provided a unique viewpoint and important information to this conversation.

Over the last two months at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, we heard from many individuals and organizations with these different perspectives on the proposed legislation, organizations like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which said, "This bill creates the opportunity for balancing aggregate uses with other equally significant land uses," and that "AMO believes the framework necessary to move forward to resolve and improve aggregate-related matters can be found in this bill."

We also heard from companies that support the aggregate industry, including professional planner James Parkin of MHBC planning, who said, "As a starting point, the Aggregate Resources Act is strong, progressive environmental legislation. I support this review."

I want to thank everyone who took the time to appear at committee and who shared their feedback on this bill. After hearing their views and perspectives, our government brought forward several amending motions which were adopted into this bill.

One of the concerns related to the consideration of drinking water sources. The Aggregate Resources Act currently considers, as part of the application process, the effects on ground and surface water sources, including drinking water, but we heard concerns that the proposed phrase in the bill was too narrow in scope. In response to this concern, it was expanded to include drinking water sources in general.

Another provision originally proposed under Bill 39 would create flexibility in the frequency of self-compliance reporting by operators. In response to what we heard, we brought forward an amendment that would reintroduce the requirement to file compliance reports annually. I believe, Speaker, that the amendments we put forward will make our proposed legislation more effective.

I'd like to note that many of the comments we received relate to the next phase of this process: the development and introduction of draft regulations. I'd like to take a second to touch on these concerns, one of which, the issue of fees, remains a priority for this government. We recognize that fees haven't been updated since 2007 and that municipalities bear the significant

burden to maintain road infrastructure used by aggregate operations. My ministry has been reviewing aggregate fees, taking into account the varied comments and input that has been provided to date.

We are taking a phased approach to fee and royalty changes. As a first step, I'm pleased to say that on March 17, we posted details of our proposed changes to fees on the regulatory registry for comment. In this first phase, we're proposing that fees would be increased and equalized, royalty payments for existing sites with a mining lease would be addressed, and fees and royalties would be indexed. In the next phase, we will continue with our review of ARA fees and consider more complex changes.

1620

Likewise, the subject of aggregate recycling was top of mind during these public meetings. I know that many of our stakeholders would like to see recycling allowed in sites by default. The ability to recycle and reuse a non-renewable resource is critical to its sustainable management. However, this doesn't mean that recycled aggregates are the right fit for every aggregate site or for every use. My ministry will continue to encourage aggregate recycling in pits and quarries, with appropriate controls. As we move forward with the next phase of changes to the regulations, standards and policy, we'd be pleased to accept further input on measures that would facilitate more recycling of aggregate materials.

I'd also like to assure all interested parties that, in continuing our practice of openness and transparency, there will be additional opportunities for consultation to provide input on future proposed regulatory changes as we move forward.

This draft legislation, as I've noted, is just the first step, but a very significant one that, if passed, would move us forward in the right direction for appropriate and effective management of aggregate resources. I'm very proud of our achievement to date in bringing this bill to this point.

This proposed legislation will help us to achieve a secure and sustainable future for Ontario's aggregate resources. It lays a foundation for a strong and modern Aggregate Resources Act policy framework that will support Ontario today and very well into the future. This bill will support continued economic prosperity for our province while protecting our environment and enhancing the quality of life for all Ontario families.

This draft legislation, if passed, would also help ensure that aggregate is available to continue to build our province up for at least another 150 years.

I want to thank again everyone who brought forward their ideas for making this proposed legislation relevant and responsive to our modern needs. I encourage all members in the House to vote for the passage of this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along with debate, I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm honoured to join my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to address Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to review for the House the strengths of this proposed legislation and why this is a bill that deserves the support of the House.

If passed, Bill 39 would enhance Ontario's global competitiveness in the mineral sector. We would introduce a streamlined electronic mining lands administration system that industry clients could access 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It would allow the government to implement an efficient online system to register mining claims. These proposed efficiencies would make it easier to prospect, explore and develop mineral deposits in the province of Ontario.

During public hearings on Bill 39, the members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy heard presentations from mining industry spokespeople representing mining company Goldcorp Inc., and lands management company In Good Standing. Members of the standing committee had the opportunity to ask the presenters questions about the amendments proposed in Bill 39, schedule 2.

I'm very proud of the work that was done with the mining sector to prepare for these proposed amendments. Many of the comments demonstrated that the work of the ministry was thorough and effective. As the rep from the company In Good Standing said in her presentation to the standing committee, "First and foremost, the MNDM is ... doing a remarkable job at trying to communicate what they can about what the proposed changes are."

For the benefit of the rest of the House, I will refer during the course of my remarks to some additional comments from those reps in support of Bill 39 as it relates to mining. In the limited time I have available, I will share excerpts from those presentations that show an informative picture of the industry's response.

There is no question that mineral exploration and mining are vital components of our provincial economy. Consider that last year, Ontario's mineral production was valued at \$10.6 billion, the fourth year in a row that that figure has exceeded \$10 billion. Consider too that last year Ontario also led the country in exploration spending. At \$371 million, this accounted for about one quarter, or 25%, of Canada's total mineral exploration expenditures.

Ontario's exploration community achieved this despite a global economic climate for the past several years where weak metal prices made it more challenging for junior companies to raise investment funds for exploration and where major players focused on improving production efficiency and reducing costs rather than on expansion. It is essential that exploration activity leading to the development of new mines in our province be carried out on a continual basis through the cyclical ups and downs that the industry is subject to. And it is essential for the provincial government to encourage that activity using every means possible.

In a submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, an industry spokesperson, on behalf of the

company In Good Standing, said, “The vision behind Ontario’s Mineral Development Strategy is to become the global leader in the mineral sector. The extensive work invested into the modernization of the Mining Act, supported by years of industry consultation and careful industry-wide consideration of cause and effect, is positioning the province to bring that vision to reality.”

Bill 39, if passed, would help ensure that Ontario continues to be a leading global mineral producer now and into the future.

When my colleague Michael Gravelle stood before this House last October to address Bill 39, he provided a comprehensive explanation of the context of schedule 2 and its benefits. He explained that, if passed, the amendments to the Mining Act proposed in Bill 39 would be introduced in two stages. This would be in keeping with the phased approach which the Ontario government has taken since 2009 to modernize the Mining Act to bring it more in line with the current practices of industry and the expectations of society.

In the first stage, we would implement certain components of the new electronic mining lands administration system. This would allow industry clients to register, to set up their accounts and update their current data in the new system.

The second stage of amendments proposed in Bill 39 would see the ministry migrate to an online suite of functions that are currently available only in paper form or through a manual process. This would include implementing an online claim registration system that would help explorationists across the province and industry clients around the world. Online claim registration would replace the current processes of ground-staking in northern Ontario and paper-staking in southern Ontario.

The benefits of introducing these online systems include defining claim boundaries more precisely; minimizing disruption to the land in nearby communities caused by ground-staking; making data available in real time; levelling the playing field when it comes to the opportunity for acquiring claims; and streamlining land management in Ontario and reducing the administrative burden for clients.

I would like to expand on the last point. The mining lands administration system that would be implemented with the passage of Bill 39 goes beyond introducing online claim registration, although that would be the biggest change for clients and it has drawn the most attention.

The proposed mining lands administration system would create tremendous efficiencies for clients as well as for the government. It would cut down significantly on paperwork by taking the current eight systems that clients interact with during the course of managing their claims and create one integrated system. For clients, this would significantly reduce the time they spend on mining lands administration. This includes, for example, time currently spent correcting and re-submitting paperwork that turned out to contain errors when it was received by the provincial recording office.

The system would also provide automatic, real-time notification to any potentially affected indigenous communities, as well as the client, following claim registration and claim transfer. This would go a long way to addressing both the concerns of indigenous communities that they need to be engaged and consulted on exploration activities before they occur, and the desire of industry for business efficiency. In the words of the Goldcorp rep, “The proposed mining lands administration system will enhance customer service and the ability for industry or the landholder to self-manage their land tenure with increased flexibility for retention of their lands and future planning.”

Interestingly, the ministry learned through discussions with the provinces that have introduced online registration that their new claims systems have not resulted in large areas of land being tied up by a few companies or foreign interests, which was a concern the ministry had during its outreach. I can assure you that Ontario has consulted extensively with these jurisdictions to benefit from their experiences—both to avoid what did not work well and to improve on what did work—to design the comprehensive integrated system Ontario is now proposing to implement. If this legislation is passed, not only would Ontario keep pace with similar changes implemented in other provinces, it would also help Ontario maintain its competitive edge and continue to lead the Canadian mineral sector.

1630

Speaker, a moment ago, I quoted an industry rep who referred to the extensive work and years of industry outreach that MNDM has invested into the modernization of the Mining Act, leading up to the drafting of the legislation before us today. The ministry has indeed conducted extensive engagement and outreach, not only with industry, but with other stakeholders and indigenous communities and organizations. This has included the following:

- more than 150 engagement and information sessions with indigenous groups, industry clients and organizations, NGOs, special interest groups and the general public;

- direct contact with more than 500 claims holders to date, resulting in almost 400 one-on-one sessions with individual mining claim holders to discuss converting their claims to the proposed system;

- presentations to industry associations, such as the Ontario Prospectors Association, the Ontario Mining Association and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada;

- additionally, more than 50 regional outreach sessions with indigenous groups across the province; and

- information also posted twice on the environmental and regulatory registries for a total of 108 days, providing opportunities for public review and comment.

In addition, the ministry has developed a website that provides regular updates on the Mining Act modernization process to industry clients and claim holders, and allows stakeholders to subscribe to the site to ask questions and receive new information.

As the Ontario government has done throughout the process of modernizing Ontario's Mining Act, which Bill 39 seeks to take to the next phase, we will continue to work to strike a balance that works for all parties just named. A priority for the government is to encourage development of mineral resources in Ontario in a way that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing aboriginal and treaty rights.

On that subject, the rep from Goldcorp Inc. expressed the view that the proposed change from ground-staking to online claim registration "accommodates the concerns of both industry and the surface rights holders and land users, being the aboriginal communities." She went on to say, "Industry's greatest concern over the past decade is certainty: certainty of their land tenure and subsequent permitting. Online staking allows for the real-time confidential acquisition of mining lands. And yes, this is pre-consultation with First Nations. However, with online staking, there isn't any physical access to their lands, so they remain undisturbed. This is key."

Through engagement with indigenous groups, the ministry has developed proposals to address the concerns of First Nations and Métis about implementing the proposed integrated online mining lands administration system.

Speaker, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines continues to work diligently with indigenous communities that are participating or are interested in participating in the mineral sector. We are committed to providing training—for example, prospector training—to those who wish to participate. As I said, this is a priority for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

What you heard in the quote a moment ago and what the ministry has heard clearly from industry during discussions is that they support the increased certainty of claim boundaries that the passage of Bill 39 would enable. In the words of one presenter, online claims registration would result in claim boundaries that would be "incredibly more accurate" than they are under the current system of ground-staking.

Having accurately defined boundaries is vital for industry. It would increase "certainty and confidence to attract investment in exploration" in Ontario. "Without certainty of land tenure, including the precise location of our mining claims, Ontario lags to attract investment as compared to other provinces or regions."

The second presenter agreed that the changes proposed in Bill 39 would "undoubtedly bring greater accuracy and certainty of the location of claim holders' mining claims, rights and interests, and offer flexible management of land assets. They will also make Ontario more competitive on the world stage."

Should the bill be passed, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines would initiate a carefully designed transition process to convert existing mining claims to claims under the online system. On this point, both presenters agreed that MNDM has been very active in its outreach to contact and inform all parties, including industry. One said they "had personal sessions with the

ministry, personal information sessions. They are offering sessions with any client who wants it, to pre-convert their lands to see what it's going to look like after conversion happens, if these amendments pass.

"I don't feel that there is more that can be done."

The presenter on behalf of In Good Standing emphasized the importance of moving ahead with implementing the proposed changes: "The sense of urgency to move forward ... is vital...."

"And to get people on board and educated with what they should be aware of. All of this is manageable, but they need to know ... what their options are moving forward."

After extensive discussions with industry stakeholders about how claims would be converted from ground-staking to online registration, the majority of mining companies and industry organizations have expressed support for the technical amendments as proposed in Bill 39.

To quote one of the presenters, Ontario is "positioned to become a global leader in mineral development. We have had the opportunity to leverage best practices and lessons learned from provinces that have gone before."

Should Bill 39 be passed, the ministry will continue its active program of outreach and consultation, leading up to the implementation of the new mining lands administration system.

Earlier this month, I, along with more than 24,000 delegates from around the world, attended the 85th international mining convention, which is hosted every year in Toronto by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. If you want to experience how dynamic the mining exploration and development business is, I recommend spending time at PDAC talking to delegates from across Canada and from abroad.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, as in previous years, Ontario was once again recognized as Canada's leader in both exploration spending and in mineral production.

Ontario is Canada's leader in exploration, spending and mineral production. The Ontario government is fully committed to keeping it that way. We are committed to encouraging more exploration, and helping to foster more mineral discoveries in this province, to keep Ontario a top global mining jurisdiction.

Speaker, at the beginning of my remarks, I pointed out that a vibrant mineral exploration sector is essential for Ontario's immense mining potential to be realized, for the benefit of future generations. Let me repeat: It is essential for the provincial government to support and encourage that activity, and to do so in a way that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing aboriginal and treaty rights.

One way in which the Ontario government is achieving this is by modernizing the Mining Act, a process which we have undertaken in a considered and phased approach.

Bill 39, schedule 2, would usher in the next phase in this process. If passed, Bill 39 would allow us to make

the necessary technical amendments to continue the process of modernizing Ontario's Mining Act and bringing us into the 21st century.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the House about the economic importance of Ontario's mineral exploration and development, and the advances that Bill 39 would provide to the minerals sector, for the continued benefit of all who live in this province. In the words of one of the presenters, "It is time to move forward."

Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Back to the minister for—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No? It's all good?

Further debate? I recognize the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: First, I understand that there's an agreement that we stand down our lead at this moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a wonderful privilege to stand in my place here, on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, and today particularly, in my role as the critic for northern development and mines as well as indigenous relations and reconciliation. I will enjoy my opportunity to add my comments on Bill 39. Goodness knows, there's a lot to be said about this particular bill.

I want to first acknowledge the wonderful work that my colleague the member from Timmins-James Bay has done in committee, to bring corrections to a lot of what we see in Bill 39. Unfortunately, the bill came back to the House for third reading without the major amendments we wanted to see in this bill.

1640

Some of you might recall the Blueprint for Change. There were 38 recommendations that were made to strengthen this act, Mr. Speaker. There were a vast amount of recommendations asking for stronger oversight, environmental accountability, improved information and participation, increased equalized fees and royalties adopted, and a collaborative approach to developing the engaging of key stakeholders, municipal organizations and aboriginal communities in the fall of 2014.

I recall those because I participated in some of those meetings. I actually hosted the entire committee—the working group, that is, of the committee—when they came to Manitoulin Island. I offered to bring them out for a nice meal—a supper—but unfortunately, they were in a rush and had to get on the bus, and off they went.

Discussions are important, Mr. Speaker. In fact, they're essential. But you have to be hearing what others are saying when you're having those discussions.

Let's talk about who this government refuses to hear within the context of this bill. Section 3.1 of schedule 1

"requires the minister to consider whether adequate consultation with aboriginal communities has been carried out before exercising certain powers relating to licences or permits." Of course, that's something that should have been done a long time ago. Unfortunately, it's not within the act right now, and this is the process that has to be put in there. However, it's still not clear how this amendment will be implemented, and that is a major concern for First Nations across this province.

Some of you might remember the speech I gave last fall on this bill. Sadly, I have asked, and I continue to ask, the same questions now as I did then: What is that responsibility? How will the government address this? There is no clear framework as to what the engagement is going to look like. Who is going to be responsible for that engagement? Is it going to be passed on to industry? Is it going to be on First Nations? Will it be the government's role? Still, this bill remains unclear in regard to answering those questions.

There were some stakeholder groups, including Six Nations, who were very concerned about the first section of this bill. Actually, they were very clear when they said that if Bill 39 was not amended to require consultation and the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations before approving aggregate projects that impact First Nation territory, then the bill was unsupportable.

Mr. Speaker, this is a deal breaker for us, and we're very concerned after seeing this government refusing these very democratic and respectful changes requested to the bill. A lot of our issues and a lot of the challenges that we have are that there is no clear framework established as far as what engagement is.

You see, as they say here, "enhanced powers" for the minister. The modernizing part is interesting, but the vagueness of it all is a bit concerning. I'm sure the minister is well intentioned and knows how to do his job well, or her job well. However, these discretionary enhanced powers in the hands of a new minister who has no idea how this whole sector works seems like scary thought. Vague rules are easily bent. My point is that even if they might seem clear for the minister right now, they might not be seen as clear for the person who will do the job the next time.

When you say "modernization" of the Mining Act, we're changing certain definitions. It sounds like a big change and it looks nice in the papers, but we're really accomplishing a very small step. The mining sector wants change, and we're doing very little to help.

I wanted to touch on a few of those from the mining sector because the mining sector in this province hires, directly and indirectly, over 300,000 jobs. If we're going to do something, we really need to be looking at what we're doing for the mining sector.

I, as well as the minister, was at PDAC, and the message that I received a lot from industry, from mining companies and from First Nations organizations that were there—the one from the First Nations was, "We want a transparent and open dialogue, so that we know where we stand. We want to have consent in order for us

to proceed with projects. We want to be involved. We want to be supported, in order to provide the opportunities to get to the resources or mine our resources."

At no point whatsoever did I ever hear any of the First Nations communities say that they were opposed to development. To the contrary, they are looking to enhance their capacity for their communities.

On behalf of industry, the message that I received from them was that the unfortunate part is that here in Ontario there is uncertainty. Here in Ontario there is no established framework. I come in, and I invest, and I'm looking at developing a resource. I don't know what I need to do in order to get to the end of the line, to see this project to fruition. Why? Because there is no established framework. Nobody knows whose responsibility it is, or at what level they are to be engaged with the industry or with First Nations or with this government.

What industry is saying is, "Wait a second. We know you have rich resources here in Ontario. We know they are there. We're going to bank them. In the meantime, while you guys figure out how to establish a framework; what meaningful engagement and consultation mean; what the revenue-sharing formula is going to be with First Nations; and how you are going to be transparent with First Nations—when you guys figure that out, give us a call and we'll come back. But in the meantime, we're going to go and invest in other jurisdictions."

That's the message that I received while I was over at PDAC. I'm not sure what message this minister received, or what PDAC convention he was at, but that message was put to me extremely clearly while I walked the floor over at PDAC, at the various levels of the convention centre. It was crystal clear, and they have been continuing with that same message for a very long time.

A lot of mining companies are struggling with the cost of it all. When you look at opportunities to invest in Canada, and you look at energy costs in different provinces, Ontario, again, doesn't look that attractive, especially right next to Quebec and Manitoba, where their energy costs are a third, if not less, of what we pay here.

The other thing that we need to talk about, when it comes to mining, is promoting our industry. For a long, long time, we have always looked at mining as being that dark hole underground. But the technology has significantly improved and has significantly changed the environment; the health and safety factors; the opportunities for jobs; the geology, below ground and above ground; and the trades that are within the industry. The opportunities are endless. This is not your grandpa's mine anymore. Things have changed.

There are a lot of opportunities in our province, and we need to make sure that our industry has the potential to offer those good-paying jobs, with great new innovative projects. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce reported last year that Ontario was ninth as the most attractive jurisdiction in this country. Why the heck are we ninth, Mr. Speaker? With the resources that we have here in Ontario, we should be first.

But there is an even more fundamental problem here. The one that we need to address is that we need an

engagement process. After reports are submitted, after consultations are done, after all this information is put together, there needs to be an established framework put into place as to when we can move forward and how we move on, because we stay stuck in the mud. We don't move forward, and we pass the buck to somebody else as to their role, that they are to consult—with who, we're not sure. How, and how much, and what that process is, are still left to be determined.

We can't progress. Whose responsibility is it to have the discussion with the various stakeholders? We need to bring that into a wholesome discussion, so that we have a set of guidelines we can now follow, so that we can weigh in on how we're going to proceed with the future of opening up a mine or a quarry.

Let's go back in time a bit. The Aggregate Resources Act remains unchanged over five years, even after an ARA review was promised back in September 2011 by this Liberal government during the election campaign, with the Melancthon mega quarry issue on many people's minds.

1650

It has also been three years since the review committee released its report in October 2013, and over two years since the government released its response to the report in February 2014, in which the government promised new legislation by the fall of 2014. Well, it's no surprise: This government is almost three years behind.

In October 2013, the committee released its consensus report with 38 recommendations. The comprehensive government response committed to stakeholders and indigenous committees to find solutions. Many of these solutions were found outlined in the blueprint which I alluded to earlier, but that blueprint has more details within it than this legislation does, and that's quite unfortunate.

We're left with the hope that the government will act appropriately and make these changes accordingly. Some 400 comments were submitted, and strong support was received to move forward, as this blueprint was seen as a positive step. Sadly, there are more details about this government's proposal on aggregate policy in the blueprint than, again, in the actual legislation itself. The blueprint is a great tool and guideline to developing legislation, and outlined the general consensus among all stakeholders on how the legislation should be amended.

There's quite a bit of disappointment that there's more within the blueprint than there is, once again, in the legislation. Although we do see some of its content being used, the majority of the issues and proposed changes mentioned in the blueprint remain to be seen in this bill.

What is missing within the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act is within both schedules.

The one thing that is really missing is a clear process as far as what the next steps are, what the procedures are, what the parameters are, what the framework is that we're going to need in order to engage a successful mining project or aggregates project, and how that engagement is going to be reflected with consultation and

consent of First Nations. Again, there's nothing within this act that clearly states what that is going to look like, and that is a concern for both the mining sector and the aggregates sector.

My colleagues and I were hoping to see some changes coming from the discussions in committee. It seems like our concerns were unanswered or not even listened to.

Having touched on those, a lot of my comments on Bill 39 going forward are going to be on the aggregate resources side of it.

Again, the government is asking this Legislature to trust. This enabling legislation is vague and leaves almost all of the crucial details to regulations. The government has very little to show for over five long years of reviewing the Aggregate Resources Act. That's not good enough for industry stakeholders, environmentalists and the people of Ontario, who are asking for details as far as what's going to happen. Nothing seems to be clarified in this legislation, and the real possible changes are going to be left up to regulations, so everybody is kind of doing a "What's going to happen?" That is not how we're going to have development in this province.

We need to see certainty, Mr. Speaker. Industry needs to know how these new jobs are going to be created. Industry is asking us time and time again, what is going to be the process as far as engagement? "If we complete those reports, if we do those required assessments, if we follow the steps, if we do the analysis, if we do the consultation, all right. Then what is the next step?" It's not here; it's not clearly identified.

First Nations, Mr. Speaker, are asking many of the same questions, as well. They have been asking, "Well, what is the process of engagement and whose responsibility is it? And what exactly is government's responsibility?" Because everything seems to be pushed away: "You guys do it. You guys figure it out. And once it's done, come back to us." First Nations are asking for open discussions, transparent discussions. I think the government should be playing more of an active role when it comes to those discussions. Some First Nations have different ways of handling, and you have to respect those processes as well. There should be a general consensus as far as what that engagement or consultation is going to look like. Again, that, when it comes from First Nations, is something that is open, something that is transparent, and something that happens before a decision is done.

A lot of the decisions that we see that have happened with the mining sector, and particularly—I'll raise the issue—with the Ring of Fire, is that decisions were made, actions were taken, and then the First Nations were asked to come and join the discussion. Walls were built; relationships were broken. Now we're having to spend a lot more time trying to rebuild those relationships and trying to establish that trust. Because trust, once it's broken, is very hard to bring back to a level where you have a working relationship. Unfortunately, what has happened is that certain decisions were made, and the parties weren't invited or were invited afterwards, which caused that distrust. The walls have been built, and we continue those walls right now.

Another part is the blueprint proposals, like the impacts on agriculture studies and the maximum disturbed area provisions, are not even described in this bill. Again, these were brought up very loudly during the consultation process. The blueprint proposed changes to modernize and strengthen the policy framework through legislation, regulations, standards and policy.

There was a lot of work that went into the creation of this draft. When people saw this draft, they were quite encouraged and were looking forward to seeing the actual legislation, but it's not there. Again, we're simply left with the hope that the government will appropriately use the powers that were given to them by passing this vague legislation.

It seems like we're not talking about recycling in this bill, either—one of the cornerstones of this bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Shame.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You're right. I agree with the member; it's a shame.

The biggest user of aggregates in this province is the Ontario government. When you think about it, why wouldn't the government take the lead on recycling? Why wouldn't they be more environmentally friendly in regard to being responsible as to what comes out of our aggregates and how they can actually be used? And once we have that material to be recycled, why wouldn't we look at the volume and measure these volumes that come back into it so we can do an appropriate mix? Why, Mr. Speaker? Why are we not being more aggressive in the recycling measures?

I think we can all agree on the need for greater use of recycling aggregates. The blueprint highlights concerns for recycling and outlines measures which are not reflected in this bill. Again, there are a lot of great ideas in this bill; however, those discussions didn't come up—those individuals who participated.

The better record-keeping, the inventory, the information: All of this information which was done through the blueprint was not reflected in this. That's unfortunate. To ensure the effectiveness, just a recording of the tonnage conditions and tonnage limits should apply when the blended and recycled materials get done. However, this bill is also silent on maximizing use of recycling aggregates, such as allowing as-of-right deposits of recycled materials at quarry sites, subject to quality standards, and only has provisions to enable record-keeping and tracking to recycle aggregates.

Mr. Speaker, I have a heck of a lot more to talk on this bill, but unfortunately, my time has gone. As you can see, there was a lot of input. There was a lot of time and effort that was put into this blueprint. The unfortunate part is that the Blueprint is missing out of this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? Questions and comments? Last call for questions and comments.

Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 39 now that it has been returned to the House from committee. I just want to commend my colleague from

Algoma-Manitoulin. He made some very excellent points. We worked collaboratively, shoulder to shoulder, during the committee process, and I'll talk about that over the next half-hour or so.

1700

I will be sharing my time with my colleague who is the critic for northern development and mines, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

If I can, I'd like to take a quick look at the process of how we got this far in our attempt to reform the province's aggregate resources laws. It all kind of starts about seven years ago with the State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario Study. That was released back in 2010. From there, we had the general government committee here at the Legislature. They undertook a committee study of the process as well. It took us the better part of a year to complete that, between hearings here at Queen's Park and some travel. Both of those processes produced recommendations, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin just mentioned, the lion's share of which have largely been ignored by this legislation—not to mention the fact that both of the reports sat on shelves for pretty well half a decade collecting dust while the ministry failed to act on them.

But here we are. The legislative process has tried to work, and we have a bill reported back from committee. Of course, when I first spoke to this bill at second reading back in October, I was still the natural resources critic, and things have changed since then. Not that many things have changed in the bill since then, of course.

When the bill first left the House back in the late fall, the government wanted all committee hearings done before Christmas.

Let's go back to the part where I said that this started back in 2010 with a government study and moved on to 2012 with a committee study at general government. Presumably, somewhere in the intervening four years, the government had enough time to get its act together. Of course, in that time, we've had five natural resources ministers—five of them—almost as many MNR ministers as we have had energy ministers.

We heard at this time last year that the amendments to the act would be forthcoming. That was when the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan was still minister. We got a change of minister, and we've still got the bill.

We didn't get much of a bill in the first place. In the 37 pages of legislation that deal with aggregate resources, there were 59 references to regulation in the bill as it was before us at second reading. In her speech, which was all of about half an hour or less, the minister made 15 references to regulation.

We're here at second reading, and we have a bill that didn't even get slightly less regulatory at committee. There are still 59 references to regulation—not counting the explanatory note at the start of the bill—in the schedule that deals with aggregates alone.

Since the government clearly didn't listen to me at first reading, it bears repeating why I keep harping on this point: too much regulation.

Yes, we are dealing with water tables, and that's very, very important. Yes, we're dealing sometimes with agricultural land as well, and that's also very important. We should take extra caution, and there should be regulations in place for that, and there are. That's a good thing, but that's not what most of the regulatory references in the bill deal with. Here's just a quick sampling:

—"Regulation-making authority is added to require fees or other payments under the act";

—"Amendments require fees payable under the act to be prescribed by regulation and not set by the minister";

—"Regulations may also provide for the disbursement of those fees and payments by the trustee, person or entity to such other persons or entities as may be prescribed by regulation."

I'm a former small business critic as well. I've had a lot of portfolios since arriving here six years ago—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Wow. Multi-talented.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm not sure how I was as a small business critic in the eyes of the government whip—but I had small business and red tape as my first portfolio when I got here.

I want to make a point that I have made a lot of times in this House: If you have to draft a regulation—and I understand that that's a Liberal government and they love regulations, all 380,000-plus of them—then you should draft it like a small business person is going to have to comply with it. Think of the small business person every time you're drafting a regulation. That has always been my primary concern with this legislation.

In my neck of the woods, I deal with a few aggregate companies. I have a very big Lafarge facility in Point Anne and a very big Lehigh cement plant in Picton, but I also have family-run operations in rural parts of Hastings county that aren't so big. If you draft regulations like everyone in the business is Lafarge or Lehigh or St. Marys Cement, you end up with a situation where no one smaller than those companies can compete.

I know I shouldn't have to tell people this—but once again, we're dealing with a Liberal government over there—if you make it harder for the smaller companies to operate, they'll either sell out to the big ones or they'll close. As you have less competition across the sector, you end up with higher prices, but you also end up with lower wages as a consequence. In short, increasing regulatory burden is a really good way to end up with really expensive roads really quickly, something that no municipal property taxpayer wants to hear.

Small, family-run aggregate companies don't have big compliance departments. They can't deal with the burden of red tape. Complying with the law has to be simple. The process should be transparent. If something needs to be done, the first resort should be to do it in legislation instead of through regulation. That way, everyone knows what the law is, and it can't be changed at the whim of a minister or a government. After all, the members of the House are here to debate and vote on things, but with the amount of times time allocation has been introduced in the House since the last election, it's clear the govern-

ment doesn't value either the voice of the vote or the vote of its members.

Returning to my earlier point about the process, we went almost five years between a committee report and a bill being introduced in this House. When we finally did get a bill, we got an omnibus piece of legislation. The schedule of this bill that deals with the Mining Act, which my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka, with whom I'm sharing my time, will be speaking to, was introduced prior to prorogation. It should have been introduced as a stand-alone piece of legislation. The schedule that deals with the aggregates amendments should likewise have been a stand-alone piece of legislation.

We consume between 160 million and 180 million tonnes of aggregate in Ontario each year. We have 444 municipalities, all of which have infrastructure needs of their own, big infrastructure deficits, and 70% to 80% of the aggregate that we consume every year is done by the public sector, as was mentioned by my friend from the third party.

Before I go into the actions by the government that kept us from travelling this bill so that we could hear from those municipalities, I would like to acknowledge some of the work done by my colleagues, because I believe that had it been up to the members of the committee, we would have been able to travel this bill. The members from Algoma—Manitoulin, the member who just spoke, and Timiskaming—Cochrane, another member of the third party, were very co-operative in our attempts to actually travel this bill to places where they build roads that don't start with T-O and end in T-O, if you know what I mean.

I even want to thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville because, for that first meeting, I thought we actually would end up treating committee like a branch of the House that is supposed to review instead of simply approve government legislation. The member from the government, from Mississauga—Streetsville, seemed very, very open to the concept of taking this bill to where the people are affected, which I think is something that we're seriously lacking here at Queen's Park these days.

If we have the opportunity to hear directly from the people outside of the GTA—and there is a huge province outside of the GTA—we should take the opportunity to do that. Once it became clear that the bill wouldn't be reported back to the House by Christmas, I thought that we would take the necessary time to make sure that we got this right. So we didn't rush it through before Christmas, which was great. We actually had some really productive discussions—at least, I thought we had—with the member from Algoma—Manitoulin, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and the member from the government side, Mississauga—Streetsville.

I thought maybe we were going to take the time to get it right, that while the House wasn't sitting in January and February, there was a golden opportunity to take the bill on the road: travel to northern Ontario, to Algoma—Manitoulin, where many of the pits and quarries exist;

travel into Cambridge, in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, where there are a lot of pits and quarries, and hear from those who are affected by the pits and quarry there. But no, we didn't take that opportunity to hear directly from the communities where many of these pits and quarries are located.

1710

Surely, with a government that expends so much money and staff time extolling the virtues of their infrastructure plan, you'd think that making sure we have the right legislative framework to decide how, when and where we are going to blast that rock from that makes the roads and the bridges and the buildings they want to build would be important, that we would take the time to get that right.

Did we? No. We did get five-minute deputations increased to 10-minute deputations. Of course, they were here at Queen's Park, because clearly that 10-minute elevator pitch is really what we need when we are talking about a multi-billion-dollar industry, where it takes 114,000 tonnes of aggregate to build one kilometre of subway line or 18,000 tonnes for a stretch of two-lane highway. Ten minutes for a single presentation seems absolutely reasonable when you're talking about something that complex, doesn't it? Rhetorical question—sarcastic, too.

For the folks at home, if you're wondering why Queen's Park usually takes three or four tries to get something right, it's because of moments like this. When you have the time to hear from those who are directly affected—they are experts in their field—why don't we take the time, especially when we've waited as long as we have to try to get something right? It's because someone in the Premier's office said that giving 10 minutes to a deputation in committee and a few minutes for questions was appropriate when we're talking about the industry that helps us maintain the province's infrastructure stock. Meanwhile, our own legislative library provides hundreds of pages of ready background on this topic, and they can provide thousands more if you request it.

It also drastically underestimates the need for different lenses through which to view aggregate production in the province.

My friend the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane brought up in his second reading remarks on this bill that the Aggregate Resources Act doesn't apply across much of northern Ontario. There are a couple of reasons for that. One is that much of the aggregate extraction done in southern Ontario—at which most of the bill is aimed—is done on private land. The extraction done in northern Ontario is done on crown land. The other reason is that aggregates can sometimes be a product of mining. Those aggregate products, whether it's sand or stone or gravel, are supposed to be covered by the act, but often they aren't.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Those are two pretty big loopholes. Surely the government would want to make sure we heard from people who could speak to

those. You would think that, right? No. Originally, we were supposed to have one day of hearings on this bill, with three minutes for opposition questions per caucus. That's how seriously the government took this legislation when it got to committee. It's not like a \$160-billion infrastructure plan relies on having a reliable and well-sourced aggregate supply or anything.

Now, I know what some of my colleagues are saying right now—and, no, unfortunately, it's not new for the government to insult the intelligence of the people of Ontario or of members of the Legislature. It's just amazing when they're quite so blatant about it, as they were in this case.

When I got to my feet to debate this at second reading, I outlined six areas where we were hoping the government would actually listen to constructive opposition suggestions to improve the bill—just six. And I did want to be constructive. There really isn't a need for this bill to be partisan or divisive. Nobody has, as yet, found anything better than aggregate to make a road or a bridge with. Since we have no other choice, ensuring that we're doing it in an environmentally sustainable, accessible and legislatively coherent way would seem to make sense.

We've made a decision as a province that we want to have a close-to-market aggregate supply. That makes sense. We've also made a decision as a province that we're going to protect certain areas in the GTA from this kind of development. Now, you can have both, but you can't have both and treat the legislative process for developing good policy like a rubber stamp.

We have a number of municipalities in the GTA or adjacent to the GTA that have become major aggregate producers, including Milton, North Dumfries, Kawartha Lakes, almost the entirety of Dufferin county, and large parts of the rural city of Hamilton. None of these places are more than a 90-minute drive from where we are right now. It would have been very easy to take the committee to a couple of those places. "Surely," you're thinking, "the government allowed the committee to make such a minimal effort and just go to Cambridge, Milton or Hamilton to hear from small aggregate producers or community groups and seek their input on the amendments to the act." You would think that we would do that; right, Speaker? No.

I'm presently the energy critic, and I don't talk about population size anymore in meetings; I talk about "load." It's a fancy word that basically means "where the people are." "Where is the load growing?" means, "Where are we going to need the infrastructure to bring electricity to people?"

It's not that different in aggregate. The load is growing in the southwest greater Toronto area. It's growing in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. It's growing in the Hamilton-Niagara part of the Golden Horseshoe, as well. The vehicle volume currently passing over roads and bridges in these municipalities is going to grow very quickly, and it's also going to mean we need new roads. It's going to mean we have to repair old ones. It's going to mean we have to build houses.

All of that needs aggregate. So where are we going to get it? According to a number of provincial policy statements and regulations, only certain kinds of aggregate can be used for certain things, and some of that stuff is only available on Manitoulin Island or in the limestone deposits in my area of eastern Ontario.

So we have a plan to build a bunch of roads, bridges and neighbourhoods, and a bill that tells us 59 times that we're going to write the rules in regulation. That's after we refused to visit the communities where much of the stuff is excavated, which we have intentionally located right next to the communities where most of it is going to be needed.

Let's get back to the six things that we suggested as amendments for the bill. Once again, this is a 37-page bill with dozens of clauses. We suggested exactly six amendments in my speech at second reading—not exactly a big ask; just six amendments.

I've been around for a while. It's not my first rodeo, and I know that the government never gives you what you want. As long as 54 votes are on that side of the House, there will never be much of an urge by the government to include opposition amendments. We've seen that with all kinds of bills that have come forward here.

So what were the six things we wanted to see changed or clarified in the bill? As I said earlier, I think we'd like to see less left to regulation in the bill. As it is, the skeletal structure of the bill leaves too much to the discretion of the ministry and the minister, and as I stated earlier, no serious effort seems to have been made to make the bill less regulatory and actually have the House and the members review the changes the ministry would impose. So we're 0 for 1 already.

We wanted to see section 62.2 changed to clarify specific instances under which the ministry could request a peer-reviewed study. It's not to prevent the ministry from requesting one—like I said earlier, we're dealing with water tables and, in some cases, agricultural land; we'd like to get these things right—just clarity. The ministry can request a peer-reviewed study under these circumstances, and it can't under others. One set of rules for everyone in the industry: studies that add value to the application and inform the community, instead of nuisance provoked by a political desire to delay a project.

The government chose to amend section 62.3, which created stricter parameters under which the minister could require information from a licensee, so we'll give the government credit for that one. I'm feeling a little bit charitable. We'll give them partial credit for that one.

We also wanted to see the government go back to annual reporting, instead of the kind of ad hoc reporting that had been initially proposed. The government did make that amendment at committee, and so far we're at one and a half out of three suggestions. That's not too bad, but here's where it starts to turn. This is where the batting average starts to drop.

We suggested at second reading that the government work out a legislative definition as to what constituted adequate consultation with our province's indigenous people. It wasn't sufficient to leave that decision up to

the minister, because it will vary considerably from minister to minister even inside a caucus, much less from one government to another. This was important not just for aggregate pits and quarries, but also for other projects in other sectors that will require collaboration from indigenous communities.

1720

While “adequate consultation” is a term recognized in Canadian law, we need a legislative definition. The bill has come back from committee without one. But I understand that this is a particularly sensitive topic and there will be other opportunities to address this issue. So we’re one and a half out of four now.

Let’s move on to a very important issue that was central to not only the debate at second reading, but was also a central issue in the ministry’s 2010 study and the committee’s 2012 hearings: recycled aggregate.

As I mentioned earlier, we have decided in this province to maintain a close-to-market policy with regard to aggregate production, and that’s fine. A lot of jurisdictions around the world do it. But at some point, we’re going to run into a resource scarcity problem. A lot of projects require new aggregate, but even for some that don’t, there is some difficulty in integrating recycled aggregate into the supply mix, and the bill doesn’t really address this issue at all.

The MTO has done a better job at this than other public sector partners, and most private sector aggregate users, for that matter. But as I mentioned earlier, we have three major pieces of planning legislation—in the Oak Ridges moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and the greenbelt—that we have largely put off limits to aggregate resource development, for a variety of reasons.

Because we have done that, if we’re going to maintain a close-to-market supply of aggregate, we’re going to have to do one of two things: either develop a consistent and reliable recycled aggregate supply, or stop the greater Toronto area from growing. I don’t think we’re showing any signs that the GTA is going to stop expanding and stop building. I think it’s safe to say it’s not going to happen; we are going to continue to see growth. But the bill fails to address a reasonable recycled aggregates policy that will address the province’s future aggregate needs.

So we’re at roughly one and a half out of five. That average might be good enough to bat fifth for the Blue Jays tonight in their home opener—they’re off to a bit of a slow start this year, unfortunately, of one in five—but that’s not good enough for government co-operation. We need more than that.

This draws us to our last concern, and that’s the royalty. Considerable attention was paid at committee to the royalty, with a number of proponents and municipalities that would like to see the levy increased. While it’s true that the royalty is a matter of regulation and not legislation, the government hasn’t provided any indication, either here in the House or at committee, of what it would like the levy to be.

Upon reviewing the committee transcript, there was considerable discussion about raising the royalty to the

neighbourhood of 50 cents. In meetings, some stakeholders have suggested that the real number is more likely to settle around 35 cents or so, given the ministry’s reticence on this issue. But we still have been given no guidance from the ministry as to whether or not the royalty will even be increased, let alone to what price per tonne.

While we’re not talking about outrageous sums of money for any one municipality, for a number of them, it’s a revenue stream that they could use on infrastructure maintenance. We know the needs that exist in our 444 municipalities across the province. We also know that there is a limited amount of money for those municipalities that so desperately need the infrastructure money and the infrastructure upgrades in their communities.

Finally, we are at the decision on whether or not to support the legislation. I have to admit, Speaker, that my severe temptation is to refuse to support the legislation.

If you read the committee transcript from clause-by-clause, the resolute lack of contribution put forward by the government is remarkable. Both the opposition and the third party put forward substantive amendments to improve the bill. As I said, I know that not all of them were going to be supported—we discussed a number of reasons why that might be—but my colleagues from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Timmins–James Bay did considerable and earnest work to try and improve this bill; to fill in a lot of the gaps that existed in this bill; to answer a lot of the unanswered questions that have arisen because of the way the government has handled this bill.

In a 37-page bill with dozens of sections, subsections and clauses, only two really substantive amendments emerged from committee.

But that’s not why I’m tempted to vote down the bill, Speaker. The unbelievable failure of the government to address recycled aggregate in any real way punts the problem down the road for us to have to deal with later. Every day in the last two weeks, the papers in the greater Toronto area have been seized with whether the housing problem is a supply problem or not, and how we should be dealing with the housing shortage and the supply problem. I don’t think this is the proper forum to weigh into that debate, but I am going to point out one thing: If you can’t build a house or a road on it, then you definitely can’t blast rock on it.

At some point, we will have a resource scarcity issue to deal with if we’re going to both maintain a close-to-market policy, which we should, because the further you haul in your aggregate, the more you’ll increase your greenhouse gas emissions and have lands that we seal off from development. The only policy solution to that that’s available to use right now is to recycle—that’s it—and the government didn’t go far enough on the recycling issue.

I want you to think back to what I said earlier. This was one of the recommendations that was brought forward by the report from 2010. This was one of the recommendations that was made by the general government committee that studied this issue for about a

year in 2012, shortly after our arrival here at the Legislature, Speaker. A lot of work went into that, and there was a lot of discussion about recycled aggregate. I'm not sure why the government didn't address that in this bill. I think it's really important that they have some kind of legislation dealing with the use of recycled aggregate. I know many of my colleagues feel the same way.

What I would say is that any improved framework is better than the existing one that we had. As much as I feel the government could have and failed to make this a truly collaborative process when it had opposition members who were willing to do so, the bill still represents an improvement from what it replaces. It could have been a whole lot better if the government had cooperated with the members of the official opposition and the third party who wanted to work in a collaborative way and provide substantial improvements to the bill by taking it on the road. However, that didn't happen.

The process has, however, called to mind the infamous quote in these halls by the former member from Welland, because I'll tell you what: The official opposition and the third party wanted to work, but in the words of that former member from Welland, the Liberals, apparently, didn't want to work—because we could have worked together on this bill to make it better, but there was no interest on the government's part to make this a better bill by working together.

Keep in mind the regions that the members we're talking about represent. I represent a region, as I mentioned earlier, with some large quarries and pits. We had the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, and this is obviously huge in his riding. We really wanted to take this on the road to ensure that we had the best bill that we could possibly have, going forward. The government had other ideas, unfortunately.

That's all I have to say on this matter for today. I know my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka wants to touch on some of the Mining Act changes—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You do a good job.

Mr. Todd Smith: —and I know he will do a good job as well. He's a very astute member of the Legislature. I welcome his remarks right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings for covering the aggregate aspects of the bill. I will speak to the amendments relating to mining and prospecting in Ontario.

1730

First of all, I do want to recognize that the government demonstrated some flexibility around consideration of this bill. The government members of the justice policy committee originally proposed just one day of hearings with only a few days' notice and with presentations limited to five minutes. That of course would be ridiculous for any bill, but especially for a bill that will have significant impact on northern and rural Ontario.

So after a good discussion in the justice policy committee, the government agreed to two days of hearings, with a much longer notice period and 10-minute presentations. Unfortunately, the hearings were held in Toronto, with nothing in the north or in rural Ontario. As the member from Prince Edward-Hastings pointed out, I'm not quite sure what the big rush was, why we needed to limit presentations to just 10 minutes when it's a complex bill covering both mining and aggregate operations, but that was the decision of the government.

I would like to point out to the government that Steve Paikin and TVO's *The Agenda* understand the importance of travelling and visiting the north. In fact, they held two episodes just this past week, one in Kapuskasing and one in Timmins, so they get it. I don't know why this government doesn't recognize the importance of actually getting out and visiting the north and hearing from people, particularly with most mining activities happening in northern Ontario.

But back to the committee hearings: Two days of hearings is still better than one, and the longer lead time did at least give northerners a chance to review the bill and submit comments.

I want to talk about prospecting. As we have discussed before, this bill is updating the Mining Act so that prospectors can stake their claim electronically over the Internet rather than physically in the bush. Let's look at the history of prospecting and mining in Ontario. Much of this information comes from a book published by Philip Smith in 1986, *Harvest From the Rock: A History of Mining in Ontario*. This book was commissioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources. In chapter 6, "The Government Takes a Hand," Smith lays out the early history of government regulation of the prospecting and mining sector. He says that prior to Confederation, prospectors could stake claims up to 10 square miles, and that over time the maximum size was gradually reduced to 320 acres, 160 acres, 80 acres and then eventually 40 acres. In 1897, the government stipulated that "a claim could only be registered if the applicant could demonstrate to a duly authorized inspector that he had in fact found 'valuable mineral in place.'" However, that policy was dropped in 1922.

That is a long time ago; however, how claims are staked really hasn't changed that much since then. Admittedly, I'm a little nostalgic about a system of actually going out into the bush, walking the claim, cutting down a tree and putting your prospector's licence on the stake. As I've mentioned in this House before, I've actually staked a few claims myself. I think it was in 1980 when my good friend John Moses, who was a prospector, had some claims coming open, a group of 36 claims somewhere north of Sudbury—where, exactly, I'd have trouble finding now. I got a prospector's licence. The claims were coming open on April 1—at 6 a.m. on April 1—so I went out in the bush and was out there before 6 a.m. with snowshoes and a compass, and I claimed this quarter square mile. I was out there cutting a

tree down, squaring it off, putting a brass plaque on, signing it with my prospector's name—and I staked six claims. I walked this quarter-mile track and did that for each of the six claims, at which point, unfortunately, I didn't make my riches. I just signed them over and gave them to my friend, and I don't know how he did on them. But I have had some experience, that one time in my life, of actually staking some claims. That's the way it's been done.

With that process, prospectors often, especially the very experienced ones, discover and notice things when there's no snow on the ground. When they're walking the ground they actually see things, and there have been some famous mines discovered through that process of being out on the ground. So that's one of the things that would change under this new system.

Last week, the Ontario Prospector's Association held its annual conference, the Ontario Prospectors Exploration Showcase, at the Valhalla Inn in Thunder Bay. I had the pleasure of attending that last year. At this event, the organization celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first Prospectors and Mining Men meeting, which was held in Port Arthur. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the OPA on this anniversary.

The name "Prospectors and Mining Men" was accurate in 1917 because in 1892, in response to stories of women working in appalling conditions in coal mines in England, Ontario passed legislation banning women from working underground or in a mine, other than in an office. This legislation stayed in place until 1978, after a woman named Florence Lake took her case to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

While there are still more men than women working in mining, I know that mining companies are actively recruiting women, and many women now make mining their profession.

But back to the bill: One of the presenters to the justice policy committee on this bill was Tania Poehlman, founder of In Good Standing, a company that defines itself as "an experienced team of prospectors, geoscientists and lands managers dedicated to supporting your properties and objectives." Tania is a member of the Ontario Prospectors Association and is on the OPA's regulations and policies committee.

Tania did agree that online staking is the future and that Ontario needs to get on board. But she did have concerns about how this will impact prospectors who make a living by going out and exploring an area and literally staking the claim. The role of these individuals is not simply to mark the claims, but to explore the area. I'm going to quote Tania here: "Their expertise and that action of being on the ground and walking through just that first visual interpretation of what is there can have a profound impact on the development of that ground going forward."

This is a set of skills and expertise that could be lost over time if traditional prospectors are not given some way to transition to the new system.

Tania also had concerns about how the actual mapping of claims would be transferred over to an electronic

mapping system, and that the boundaries of legacy claims will be expanded outward to fit the provincial grid. This could result in stakeholders inadvertently acquiring something that might end up costing them money to remediate or creating a liability risk for them. Her suggestion was that all such hazards should be mapped, so that owners of claims can make an educated decision on the management of their claims.

While there are definitely some concerns about how the transition will work, the final result should be a good thing. As Terry Bursey from Goldcorp told us during the committee hearings, an electronic staking system will be more accurate and won't require prospectors to bushwhack through indigenous lands.

I'm going to say that this is a reasonable modernization of the Mining Act as long as all existing claims are recognized and transferred over to the new system and the concerns of the Ontario Prospectors Association are addressed, and as long as the government manages this transition to electronic records better than they have managed eHealth.

In his book *Harvest from the Rock*, Philip Smith describes early government attempts to encourage development as "a gradual process of trial and error." I do hope that this law has been thoroughly researched and the impacts known, so this won't be a trial-and-error situation.

Unfortunately, it seems that the Ontario Prospectors Association doesn't seem convinced that these changes aren't being done by trial and error. To quote the OPA's January newsletter, "There have been various presentations and processes explained to explorers by the ministry that some of us believe have not been proven or tested for the implications."

I believe the ministry was at the Ontario Prospectors Exploration Showcase last week, and I hope they were able to hear from the prospectors themselves and address their concerns.

I want to talk now about how this electronic claims process does bring up one issue. The website that will be used to stake a claim must be simple enough that it will work properly using dial-up Internet access. I say this because large parts of northern Ontario still don't have access to broadband. We should make sure that the new system doesn't give southern Ontarians—and, for that matter, people around the world—an advantage over northern Ontarians when it comes to staking a mining claim in northern Ontario.

I'm going to use a minute or two to talk about this challenge faced by citizens and businesses in the north.

Late last year, the CRTC released a report on broadband access across Canada. Something that Ontarians living in urban areas take for granted is not available in large parts of rural Ontario, particularly in the north.

The CRTC produced a map, with different colours representing different types of high-speed Internet access. Purple represents cable access, blue is DSL fibre access, and green represents fixed Internet access.

If you look at the map of Ontario, there is a dramatic difference between southern and northern Ontario. Southern Ontario is mostly all green, blue and purple, with a few gaps, while northern Ontario is totally blank except for major cities.

1740

Communities that are identified as underserved include Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls and Chapleau. I want to point out that Goldcorp is expecting to have a new gold mine in production by early 2019 just outside of Chapleau. These are the kinds of communities that need access to broadband.

And you don't have to get that far north before you get into areas not served by broadband. There are lots of parts in my riding where there's no broadband access. In fact, back in January, I was invited to McKellar town council for a meeting on a variety of different issues. They had a list of about 15 things they wanted to talk about, and one of them was access to broadband. So, as I say, you don't have to get that far north.

This isn't just an issue for business, but for individuals. Last September, the CBC ran an article about the need for high-speed Internet in aboriginal communities in northern Ontario. The article talked about a community where people were waiting until the middle of the night to check Facebook because that is when the Internet was fastest. It went on to say:

"More critically for the community, the unreliable Internet also interferes with key functions, such as health care and business transactions.

"The band office ... they require a lot of reporting to funding agencies and it takes them all day or maybe even a couple of days to upload a one megabyte file," said Wayne Slipperjack, the cable manager for Eabametoong Communications Inc.

Let's make sure online staking doesn't put northern Ontario businesses and individuals in a position where they can't stake a claim in their own backyard because of slow Internet access.

Mr. Speaker, last November, when the chambers of commerce from Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, North Bay, Sudbury and Timmins came to talk with us about creating economic prosperity in the north, they talked about the need for access to broadband infrastructure. Many of the businesses that these chambers represent are in the mining sector or support the mining sector. Mining and those businesses that support mining are a huge driver of the economy in northern Ontario.

When I was at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference last month, it was great to see so many businesses based in northern Ontario that support the mining sector. I had a chance to chat with a number of business people, like Kevin McDowell of McDowell equipment in Sudbury. Kevin is the second generation of his family to run this business. And while business is good, it would be even better if this government would start to live up to its promises about developing the Ring of Fire. There are 900 mining service and supply companies like McDowell equipment

or the Bucket Shop, which hosted one of the episodes of The Agenda last week. The majority of these companies are in the north.

The mining sector accounts for more than 100,000 jobs in Ontario: 77,000 jobs directly and indirectly in the fabrication and processing of minerals, and another 25,000 jobs in mining services and equipment. Mining is the largest private sector employer of indigenous Canadians.

Just last week, in a meeting with John Mullally, the director of government relations for Goldcorp, he told me that at the Musselwhite mine roughly 250 of the 800 employees are indigenous—250 out of 800. He also talked about how many indigenous individuals participate in Goldcorp's apprenticeship program, which gives them experience in a variety of trades and a chance at a long-term job.

Mr. Speaker, mining is hope for those Far North indigenous communities, and that's why mining is the biggest employer of indigenous people.

And these are well-paying jobs. The average weekly wage in mining is 60% higher than the average industrial wage in Ontario—60% higher.

Finally, these are safe jobs. Ontario is one of the safest mining jurisdictions in the world. Ontario started to legislate safety in mines shortly after the 1890 Charlton Commission report. Shortly after that, the Mines Act established provisions for ventilation, blasting, lifting devices, shafts, signals, brakes, machinery, boilers and the investigation of all mining accidents. Of course, this legislation has been updated many times since then, as our knowledge has increased and technology has improved. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to make a recommendation for an improvement that needs to be done now.

As I mentioned earlier, Goldcorp is about to open an all-electric gold mine in Chapleau. The current regulations basically just state the amount of air that has to be moved and all kinds of very prescriptive ventilation requirements. Well, this all-electric mine doesn't have the same sort of diesel fumes in it etc., so what Goldcorp is recommending—and I think it makes all the sense in the world—is regulations that just state an air quality objective that you have to meet.

I think that's something that should be implemented across many of the regulations in Ontario: regulations that state a goal but let the business figure out how to meet the goal rather than being so prescriptive and creating all kinds of red tape. The current regulations will require Goldcorp to put in all kinds of ventilation when they don't need it, at great expense, and great energy costs to run this ventilation as well. We all know how expensive electricity is in the province of Ontario.

There are currently 300 active mineral exploration projects under way in Ontario. In 2015, \$393 million was invested in mineral exploration and deposit appraisal in Ontario. I raise this because staking a claim is really the first step in this whole process, and a traditional prospector physically staking that claim is really doing part of that exploration. The government is going to have

to work with mining companies to find new roles and new income for those traditional prospectors.

In 2007, the University of Toronto Institute for Policy Analysis did a study on behalf of the Ontario Mining Association called Ontario Mining: A Partner in Prosperity Building—The Economic Impacts of a “Representative Mine” in Ontario. The title really tells the story: Mining can be a partner for prosperity. I want to read just the first paragraph of the report:

“The combined direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of a representative mine are extremely large. In its ‘opening’ or construction phase the mine adds about \$140 million to Ontario GDP and generates almost 2,000 jobs annually. In its production phase, for each year of operation, the mine adds approximately \$280 million to Ontario GDP and increases Ontario’s employment by almost 2,300 at a rate of compensation per employee well above the provincial average.”

The report goes on to say, “We find that a large proportion of the economic impacts of a representative mine that stay in Ontario also stay in the local area. In the building phase approximately 1,300 of the total of 2,000 jobs annually generated are local. In the production phase there are 1,500 jobs created annually at the local level out of approximately 2,300 for the province as a whole.”

This government should do everything they can to reduce red tape and help those 300 mineral exploration projects become mines. We heard from the third party before I was speaking. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin was talking about some of the challenges that you hear when you meet with mining companies. I agree with him, because I meet with the same mining companies and hear the same comments.

The fact that there’s no established consultation framework for mining companies—there’s uncertainty in Ontario, and you hear that. You meet with just about any mining company without bringing it up, and they will bring it up and tell you that there is uncertainty. There’s not an established framework for what consultation is required with indigenous people in the province of Ontario. And compared to other jurisdictions, there’s not the same sort of certainty around revenue resource sharing.

We’ve also heard about energy costs being a huge consideration. We saw just a few years ago Xstrata Nickel move out of the province of Ontario. They moved across the border to Quebec where they have a dirtier plant, a dirtier smelter, but far cheaper electricity, and we lost 700 jobs in Ontario when that happened.

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That brings me to the Ring of Fire. We cannot talk about mining modernization without asking when this government will stop making promises and start making real progress on developing the Ring of Fire. Let’s review the government’s promises about the Ring of Fire.

The Ring of Fire has been mentioned in every speech from the throne since 2010, and in most budgets. Promises, such as:

“Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, aboriginal communities and mining partners

to fully realize the Ring of Fire’s potential.” That was from the speech from the throne, March 8, 2010.

“Your government remains fully committed to turning the vast, untapped potential of the Ring of Fire into good, leading-edge northern jobs.” That was from the speech from the throne, November 22, 2011.

“A commitment of \$1 billion to develop strategic transportation infrastructure in the Ring of Fire and unlock the north’s economic growth and jobs potential.” That was the budget from July 14, 2014.

I still remember the press conference with Cliffs Natural Resources, that when you read it, the title of it was thousands of jobs coming to northern Ontario. It was a number of years ago now, but when you read the press release, I mean it sounded like within six months you were going to see these thousands of jobs, and things were just going to be booming. Well, that was years ago, and nothing has happened. I mean that all sounds great if only some of it had happened.

Why is it important that the government live up to its commitments around the Ring of Fire? According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, “The Ring of Fire is the most promising mineral discovery in a generation. Ontario cannot afford to miss this economic development opportunity.” I couldn’t say it better myself, except to point out that the Ring of Fire will benefit northern Ontario, a region that desperately needs jobs and an economic boost.

Again I turn to the chamber of commerce for statistics. Over the first 10 years of development, the Ring of Fire will generate up to \$9.4 billion in gross domestic product, sustain up to 5,500 jobs annually and generate \$2 billion in government revenue. As he prepares this year’s budget, I’m quite sure the Minister of Finance could find some useful purpose for the provincial share of \$2 billion.

Unfortunately, for all the announcements, we’ve seen very little development of the Ring of Fire, and don’t take it from me. Let’s see what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has to say now about the government’s performance in Where Are We Now? A Report Card on the Ring of Fire.

The first grade was for accelerating development in the Ring of Fire. What grade did this government get? They got an F. The second grade was for following through on the regional framework agreement between the Chiefs of the Matawa-member First Nations and the government of Ontario. What grade did this government get? They got a C. The next grade was for addressing the physical infrastructure deficit in the Ring of Fire. What did they get? They got a C-. On drawing as much as possible from the local labour force in order to maximize the benefits of the Ring of Fire, this government got a B-. That’s their best grade. On capturing more value-added processes in Ontario, a D. On making the Ring of Fire a national priority, another F. Finally, on addressing the barriers that impede the development of the Ring of Fire and, more broadly, the competitiveness of the mining sector, another C.

I don't know about the ministers of this government, but I think if my kids came home with a report card like that—my kids are all out of school now. I'm sure if the pages came home with a report card where the best grade was a B, and they had a couple Fs and Cs, I don't think their parents would be too happy with that report card.

But that's the report card that this government got from the chamber of commerce of the province of Ontario on what seemed to be a huge legacy development, what could be a hundred-year mine—a hundred-year mine—and that's the report card of this government. That's the priority that this government is showing for the Ring of Fire.

Let's look at another report card, and that's from the Fraser Institute, because they do an annual report on mining activity, a worldwide survey of mining around the world. Since this government came to power in 2003, Ontario has dropped from being the seventh most attractive place to invest in mining to 18th, according to this year's Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies.

Mr. Speaker, I do recall that back at a time when there was a PC government, we were actually number one at one point, number one in mining. We had members like Mr. Wilson, who was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member for Simcoe—Grey. At that point, there were policies in place, and we were number one in the world. Unfortunately, this year's report shows us at 18th.

By comparison, Saskatchewan ranks first, Manitoba ranks second, Quebec ranks sixth, Yukon ranks 15th, and Newfoundland and Labrador ranks 16th.

Let's look at Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Why are they on top? This is from the report: "Competitive tax regimes, efficient permitting procedures and certainty surrounding environmental regulations and land claims have vaulted Saskatchewan and Manitoba to the top in the eyes of miners looking to invest." That is a quote from Kenneth Green, senior director of the Fraser Institute's energy and natural resource studies.

One of the things they talked about here was permitting. Last year, I and some of my colleagues travelled up to northeastern Ontario and we toured Detour Gold. We

drove down about an 80-kilometre road that was built by a PC government to get that mine happening, back in the 1980s. That road is still in use, and the mine is still operating.

What was their main complaint? Permitting. They said that it just takes so long to get a permit in. With the Ring of Fire, what was supposed to take six weeks was over two years, just to get the terms of reference for permits. That's why Ontario is looking so unattractive for mining in this province.

Why is Ontario so far down the list? One respondent to the survey said this: "Building a road or rail to the Ring of Fire would help to encourage investment in the province." The government has made lots of announcements about funding infrastructure to the Ring of Fire, but nothing has happened yet.

I want to point out that this survey is weighted 40% by policy and 60% by mineral potential. We all know that Ontario's known mineral potential went up with the discovery of the Ring of Fire in 2007, so the government policy must be pretty bad to drag our investment attractiveness ranking down 11 spots. On the policy side of this survey, we ranked 26th in the world.

Ontario is home to a huge number of mining companies, and the world's largest annual mining conference, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference, which takes place every March.

I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker. In closing, I want to say that I agree with the idea of modernizing the process of staking a claim, but like so many things this government does, I am concerned about how they're going to go about implementing that policy. I hope it's not another mess-up like eHealth or various other things that they've managed to mess up, like the various electronic things they have been involved in. I don't think too many of them have gone too well. I hope they've learned from past mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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